

# Desert

DECEMBER, 1980 • \$1.50

**EXCLUSIVE:**  
**COLUMBUS WASN'T HERE FIRST!**  
**NEITHER WERE THE VIKINGS!**  
(See Page 21)

**THE MISSIONS**  
**ONORA**


**DRUNNER**  
Prince of  
ert

**THE DEADLY**  
**JIMSONWEED**

Floating the  
**RIO GRANDE**







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Who led them through the bottom of the sea? Like roadrunners racing through the desert, they never stumbled . . . Adapted from Isaiah 63:13

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## Our Cover

The perky roadrunner on our cover, painted traditionally in transparent water colors by Ken Goldman, may look familiar to those who have visited San Diego's Museum of Natural

History. Ken was a staff member there, responsible for the unbelievably natural taxidermy and dioramas of the wildlife displays.

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# EDITORIAL

## He Who Lives in Glass Houses

**A**NNE, AND THAT is not her real name, is the young divorced mother of three of the four youngsters, aged eight to eleven, who were playing with matches a little after noon on August 26 in the lower reaches of Dry Falls Canyon near Palm Springs. The children started a brush fire that in thirteen days burned more than 28,000 acres of mostly treeless wilderness in the San Jacinto foot hills.

It also destroyed six homes in Andreas Canyon and was indirectly responsible for the crash of one U.S. Forest Service helicopter. But despite the crash and the 1,600 men involved in suppressing the fire, there were only minor injuries. None of the 53 engines, twelve bulldozers, three water trucks, five airco's (command aircraft), nineteen air tankers or the other nine helicopters was damaged.

The number of men, machines and acres didn't set any record for this type of fire, and since kindly winds confined it to within what is called the rim of the desert, major recreation areas other than both terminals of the Palm Springs Tramway, and human habitat other than Andreas Canyon, were never seriously threatened. Nevertheless, they say it cost taxpayers \$3,500,000 to suppress, to which must be added the estimated \$250,000 value of the six homes. And, too, add paint damage to three cars in downtown Palm Springs which were accidentally hit by a load of prematurely released Phos-Chek.

The four little boys had also been throwing bottles into the street and complaints about that had brought two policemen to the scene who, in turn, discovered and reported the fire and, thanks to these bottles, maybe saved many lives and much property.

The first Palm Springs engine arrived in four minutes and the fire headed up the canyon, much to the relief of the city firemen.

The four little boys told officials they were sorry and who their mothers were and where they lived and so, life for Anne since August 26 has been a preview of Hell. The fact that Anne's youngest boy was held blameless by the other three hasn't helped.

I thought as I sat listening to her tell her story to a small group of friends that I had played with matches too. But I was lucky. I even remembered the time when I was smoking in our garage. A grownup approached and I tossed the lighted butt into a bottle which I found out later

contained gasoline. It didn't explode.

I don't think I ever knew a kid when I was a kid who could honestly say that he had never played with matches, and some I knew had thrown bottles into the street and against trees to see them splatter. I don't think many of the officials who have been persecuting Anne unmercifully since August 26 could say they have never played with matches either.

The persecution, in the form of constant questioning, a total invasion of privacy, is required by our law to seek redress from the responsible party, in this case Anne and the other mother who relaxed their normally careful watch over the children for a few minutes. Has any mother reading this not ever done that?

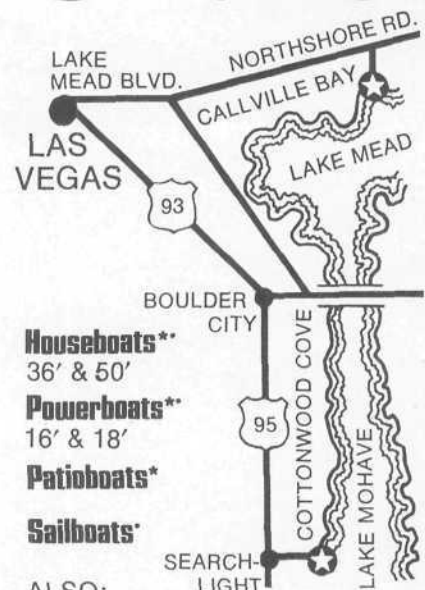
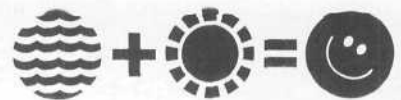
In theory, Anne now owes various governments two-thirds of \$3,500,000 plus her share of six houses and paint jobs on three cars. In fact, the obligation is a maximum of \$5,000 to government and whatever private insurance companies can collect. It won't be much because Anne is a civil servant in one of the lower grades. But that also makes her vulnerable and \$5,000 could buy a lot of sneakers and blue jeans and milk.

Meanwhile, the same federal and California officials who will be trying to collect this money are smiling. It was, as far as the wilderness and wildlife were concerned, a benevolent fire, one of the kind which is needed every sixteen years to clear out dead brush and revitalize the land. It was good "vegetative management." But of course, no official could have ordered it to be set.

The deer and the bobcat and the bighorn outran the fire and were sighted back in their burned-over habitat within two days. The smaller animals just burrowed deeper and for the most part escaped. And those that didn't will attract rector birds which in turn attract campers to the campsites.

Our law says the officials must bring the mothers into civil court. The children face years of probation on criminal charges. The children are sorry. They really are. They'll never do it again. And Anne says she's sorry to the crank callers who have found her. And she really is. I say to the officials, leave them be. Rewrite the law. They've suffered enough.

*Don Mac Donald*



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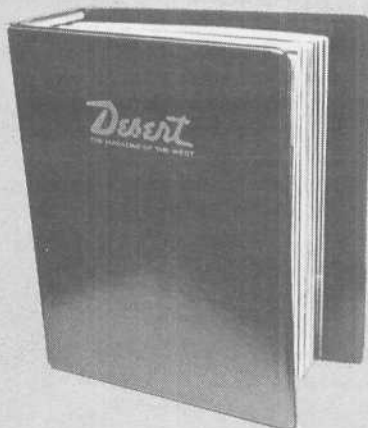
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# LETTERS

## GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

Your "Welcome" to the United States" editorial (*Desert*, October 1980) struck a raw nerve with me. Those (deleted) on the Tijuana gates may send yellow cars and red-headed women at random to secondary inspection but an older VW van is sure to get hit, even if the driver has no hair. I've had my seats taken out, my spare tire deflated, and carefully patched rust holes in the body panels broken open by those guys, and when they're through with you, they just walk off. No apologies; you put it together at your expense!

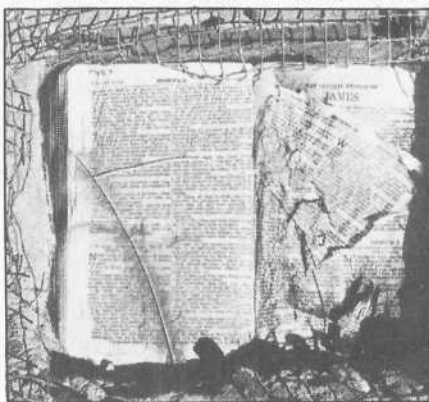
Name Withheld  
Encinitas, Calif.

Long hair whether on your chin or your scalp and old VW vans with or without surfboards spell pot by association to those who man our vehicular ports of entry. But cheer up. That kind of thinking assures that when three or four sweet little, white-haired old ladies get busted in a single week, all such ladies thereafter will get sent to secondary and they will write their congressmen and maybe sanity will be restored, or more accurately, instituted.

## MYSTERY BIBLE SHRINE

What a surprise to read Mary K. Thoms' letter (*Desert*, October 1980) wherein she mentioned an article on the Bible Shrine published in an old issue of *Desert*.

I wrote that article back in June, 1958 and I'm enclosing a tearsheet plus a photograph of the Shrine as it used to be.



I agree that it's not magazine readers who go out to a place like this and vandalize it but instead, it's the impulsive mischief of morally incompetent juvenile mentalities. As my picture shows, the Shrine was pretty much intact when I saw it.

Dorothy Robertson  
Apache Junction, Ariz.

## TARAHUMARAS REVISITED

My wife and I enjoyed your articles on the Tarahumara Indians (*Desert*, October 1980) as we had visited them at Creel and Temaris on the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad when we traveled piggyback to Los Mochis from Chihuahua last year. We heartily recommend this trip to anyone with a suitable RV and a yen to see something new. I also enjoy the violin I purchased from the man who made it in his own cave.

Carl F. Sorenson  
San Bernardino, Calif.

## MOHAVES IN THE MOJAVE

As far as I know, "Mohave" and "Mojave" are both accepted spellings for the Indian tribe and places named after it, but I don't understand why you use both the "h" and the "j" interchangeably in the same article; specifically, "The Mohaves accompanied the Spanish explorer-padre, Francisco Garcés, west via the Mojave Trail in 1776 . . ." (*Desert*, November 1980).

Homer K. Muldoon  
Ogden, Utah

The spellings are not interchangeable. The Indians called themselves "Mohaves" but it was the Spaniards who went around naming places after them and they spelled it "Mojave." Thus, for example, our use of the Mohave tribesmen revisiting the old Mojave Trail in the same article. This rule applies too to "Navaho" for those Indians and "Navajo" for places named after them; e.g., you can buy a Navaho blanket from vendors along the Navajo Trail. The only exceptions are places named by Anglo settlers which could be spelled either way as at the time, they didn't apply these fine distinctions. And yes, to anticipate your question, the Indians are referred to as *Mojave* and *Navajo* in Spanish writings but we would italicize these spellings if we had occasion to use them.

## DEATH VALLEY ENCAMPMENT

I've heard that sometime during the winter great numbers of people get together in Death Valley and re-enact the days of the '49ers, or does it have to do with the later, borax years?

Leo Killen  
Schenectady, N.Y.

You'd best get on a jet if you want to make it because the encampment starts



Thursday, November 6 and goes on 24-hours a day through Sunday. You can stay at the Furnace Creek Ranch or Inn, at Stovepipe Wells, in nearby Shoshone or camp out as thousands do. There are songfests, guided tours, pickin' music, chuck wagon meals, a great art show and photography lessons. This is the 31st annual event and there's no admission charge. The sponsors do hope, though, that you'll spend \$5.00 on a membership.

### ONE WITH HIS MAKER

I think a man needs a place he can get away to and be on a one-to-one basis with himself, his Maker and the earth around him. And the desert is the best place I have ever found for that. I left the area (Salton Sea) just about the time the first dune buggies began to tear up the sand dunes (Algodones) down near Yuma. I guess it was about time. The thought even at this great distance makes me a little sad.

Dave Larson  
Harlingen, Texas

### ZEBRAS ON THE LOOSE?

Several years ago in the bed of the Bill Williams River (runs westerly into the Colorado near Parker, Arizona) my husband and I saw several burros or mules running loose that were striped like zebras. I wonder if they actually were zebras that had escaped from a traveling circus? Although other people in the area had seen them, no one seemed to know what they were or where they came from.

Lura Ritson  
West Covina, Calif.

Mainly because of reports we periodically receive of camel sightings in the desert, we were a little suspicious of Mrs. Ritson's letter. However, since the Parker police had no complaints of record (sober ones, anyway) on escaped zebras, it's possible these were burros which had wandered away from, or had been abandoned by, their Mexican owners who often decorate their animals by painting stripes on them. Burros, mules or donkeys, striped or otherwise, are not seen much if at all in Mexican circuses except possibly as props for the photographers who separately solicit the patrons, an opportunity also afforded tourists on Tijuana street corners. There is a peculiar Tijuana ordinance that requires photographers to use female animals but the markings, if any, are optional.

According to National Park Service naturalists familiar with burros, a definite "pure" strain harking back to the first asses imported by the Spaniards can be seen in an occasional animal today but the stripes on these are limited to one or two on the haunches or forelegs. Our guess is that what you saw were wandering *bestia* from Mexico.

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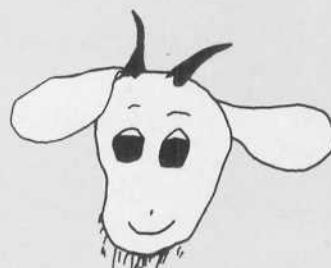
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*The Beautiful But Deadly*

# Weed from Jamestown

by WAYNE P. ARMSTRONG    Photographs by the Author





**A**NYONE WHO has lived or traveled in the southwestern United States, particularly during the summer and fall, could not fail to notice a large, malodorous and sprawling plant along roadsides and dry riverbeds with large, white, trumpet-shaped flowers. This plant goes by a



THE COMMON JIMSONWEED OF ROADSIDES AND RIVERBEDS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHWEST IS ONE OF OUR LARGEST AND MOST STRIKING WILDFLOWERS





variety of unusual names, but one of the most common is jimsonweed.

Of all the wild plants utilized in one way or another by people, jimsonweed certainly has one of the most sinister historical backgrounds. Through the centuries this innocent-looking plant has been involved in murders, in witchcraft and demonology, in military campaigns, in sly but cunning seductions and in sexual orgies. It has also been an important ceremonial plant in several Indian cultures, and has provided some valuable and important clinical drugs.

Jimsonweed is a member of the Nightshade or Tomato Family, along with the deadly nightshade, the beneficial tomato, potato, egg plant, bell pepper, controversial tobacco and decorative petunia. Many members of the family, however, are very poisonous, including jimsonweed. In fact, only a century ago, the tomato was thought to be poisonous by many people in the U. S.



During hot sunny weather the large, showy flowers often open in the evening and usually close and wither by noon the following day, though there are exceptions to this blooming sequence, particularly in cloudy, overcast weather. Within minutes on a warm summer evening you can actually watch the long, pleated buds unfold into magnificent white trumpets.

Although the foliage smells rather rank, especially when crushed or bruised, the flowers are very fragrant and are frequented by a variety of insects. Nocturnal blossoms are visited by moths in search of the sweet nectar. Each flower gives rise to a walnut-sized, oval, green, spiny fruit which later turns brown and splits open, releasing the seeds. The plant is sometimes called "thorn apple" because of the prickly fruits.

There are at least fifty different species of jimsonweed throughout the world, including Europe, Africa, India, southeast Asia, South America, Mexico and the American southwest. Most of the species are low shrubby or sprawling annuals or perennials, but there are some tree-like forms that may reach 35 feet in height. The latter are occasionally cultivated as ornamentals, and sometimes go by the scientific name of *Brugmansia*. They generally have the same characteristic trumpet-shaped flowers with color variations of white, red, pink or yellow.

The common jimsonweed of the southwest, with its huge, white, trumpet-shaped flowers up to eight inches long and four inches across, is *Datura innoxia*. Sometimes the flowers are tinged with purple, and look like oversized petunia or morning glory blossoms. It is a perennial with a very large taproot which may extend more than fifteen inches into the ground.

There is some disagreement among authorities regarding jimsonweed's exact



(ABOVE) THIS COLORFUL TREE JIMSONWEED (*BRUG MANSIA SANGUINEA*) IS USED TODAY BY "CURANDEROS" IN THE HIGHLANDS OF PERU.

(RIGHT) THE JIMSONWEED IS ALSO CALLED THORN APPLE BECAUSE OF ITS UNUSUAL SPINY FRUIT.



scientific name, and it is often listed in wildflower books as *D. meteloides*. Another fairly common desert annual with smaller flowers is *D. discolor*. The generic name *Datura* is derived from the Hindu word *dhatura* which means poison. There are numerous common names for our local jimsonweed including thorn apple, Indian apple, stinkweed, angel's trumpet, sacred datura, and the Indian and Mexican

names of toloache, belladonna and torna-loco. Torna-loco literally means "becoming crazy."

One of the most fascinating stories about this plant is how it was given the unusual common name of jimsonweed. In 1676, British troops landed at the colony of Jamestown, Virginia to quell a tobacco tax rebellion. Plagued by scurvy in the ranks, the British War Office at that time mandated the inclusion of



either citrus fruit or fresh vegetables in the meals of all troops. There are several stories about which part of the plant was eaten, but apparently the regimental cooks prepared a salad of native plant leaves and innocently included a local weed, *Datura stramonium*.

In his book, *History and Present State of Virginia*, Robert Beverly describes the event: "Some of them ate plentifully of it, the effect of which was a very pleasant comedy, for they turned natural fools upon it for several days: one would blow a feather in the air; another would dart straws at it with much fury; and another, stark naked, was sitting up in a corner like a monkey, grinning and making mows at them . . . A thousand such simple tricks they played, and after eleven days returned to themselves again, not remembering anything that had passed." Hence, the origin of Jamestown weed which was later corrupted into jimsonweed.

The leaves, stem, root and fruits of jimsonweed contain a battery of chemicals called alkaloids, the most potent of which are atropine, hyoscyamine and scopolamine. These alkaloids affect the central nervous system of humans as well as animals, including the brain and spinal cord nerves which control many direct body functions and, of course, behavior. Depending upon the dosages, the drugs may cause loss of motor coordination, nausea, dizziness, extreme thirst, burning sensations in the skin, hallucinations, delirium, stupor and even death. It has been said that jimsonweed may make one "hot as a hare, blind as a bat, red as a beet, dry as a bone, and mad as a wet hen."

The medical profession employs alkaloids, such as those found in jimsonweed, in many clinical drugs used to induce sleep, as a mild analgesic, an effective antidote for motion sickness, in treating severe hay fever and asthma victims, in relaxing involuntary muscle contraction and treating spasms of the colon and urinary tract, and dilating pupils for eye examinations.



Volumes have been written about the uses and properties of jimsonweed throughout the Middle Ages and some of its reported uses in paganish rituals, witchcraft, sorcery and sexual perversion are absolutely incredible. Most of the uses involved the consumption of potions or concoctions made from the leaves, stems, roots and even the fruit. During ancient religious rituals in India, seeds were eaten by priests to induce hallucinogenic, prophetic and oracular states.

European priests apparently drank jimsonweed for the same reason. Some authorities believe the intoxicating smoke inhaled by Greek priests over 2,000 years ago at the Oracle of Delphi was jimsonweed. Thieves in India and

Europe used jimsonweed for centuries as "knockout drops" and then robbed their stupefied victims. Prostitutes in India added the seeds to their patrons' drinks to induce sexual excitement. In fact, the use of jimsonweed as an aphrodisiac spread throughout India, the Far East and Europe, and it was an important ingredient in love potions and witches' brews.

Some historians actually believe that tales of witches flying on brooms may have originated from hallucinogenic experiences with jimsonweed. In some rituals it was administered rectally, an area where alkaloids are quickly absorbed, and during the Middle Ages, thousands of people were poisoned to death by jimsonweed, either accidentally or by premeditated murder.

One of the most interesting medical cases of the 20th Century involved a German physician, Dr. Carl Gauss, and the Lutheran Church. In 1905, Dr. Gauss used extracts from jimsonweed and morphine to induce twilight sleep for women experiencing difficult child birth. The church fathers denounced Dr. Gauss' practice because the Old Testament said that women were to bring forth in pain (*Genesis 3:16*). The combination of scopolamine (one of the active alkaloids found in jimsonweed) plus morphine has been used for years as an effective pain reliever and sleep inducer; however, it is generally considered unsatisfactory for women in labor because of hallucinogenic side effects on the mother, and it may repress breathing of the newborn.

Jimsonweed or toloache had a number of uses among Indian tribes of the southwestern United States, as well as Mexico and South America. In fact, it is difficult to find a tribe that didn't use a species of jimsonweed from their region in one way or another. Crushed leaves were sometimes applied to bruises and swellings, and also as a treatment for bites of venomous reptiles and spiders. According to Edward K. Balls, writing in *Early Uses of California Plants* (1970), dried leaves were smoked as a cure for asthma. The hallucinogenic uses involved drinking an infusion made from the crushed roots or sometimes, crushed seeds fermented in water.

Some aboriginal Indians in South America gave a jimsonweed-alcohol beverage to wives and slaves of dead warriors and chieftans. The powerful brew induced stupor before they were buried alive to accompany their dead husbands and masters on the long journey to heaven. The high priests of some tribes took jimsonweed in order to communicate with spirits of the dead and with their gods. Tree jimsonweed, including a brilliant red-flowered species, is used today by herbal healers called *curanderos* in several countries of South America.

Probably the best-known use of the


plant by several southwest Indian tribes was the puberty ceremonial dances involving the drinking of a jimsonweed infusion by young boys preparing to enter manhood. Similar puberty ceremonies were practiced by Indians of the eastern United States, Mexico and South America. The ceremonies generally involved wild erratic dancing, varied hallucinations and finally, unconsciousness.

Another interesting use for jimsonweed involves the Mandinko tribe of Western Africa, made famous in Alex Haley's best selling book, *Roots*. A poultice made from a local jimsonweed (*Datura metel*) is applied to the body for skin diseases and breast cancer. Medical scientists have recently found tumor-resistant qualities in several plants, some of them closely related to our common jimsonweed.



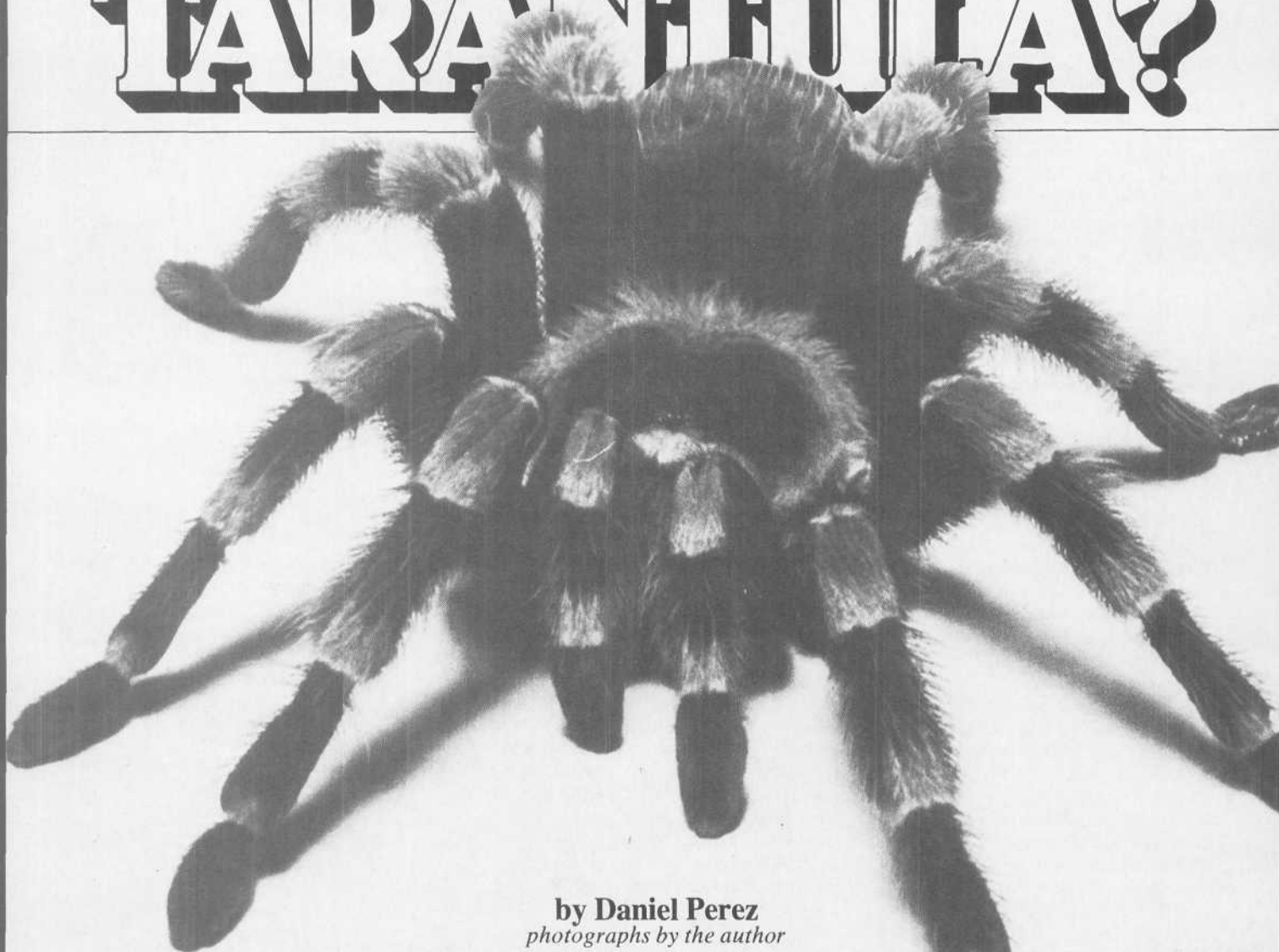
The history of jimsonweed in Old World civilizations has been an unholy one, although some of its medicinal uses were probably sound, at least for that period of time. Jimsonweed is definitely not a plant to play around or experiment with. Even our common southwest species are dangerously poisonous. All parts of the plant are toxic if eaten, and may cause death if not quickly treated by a physician. The plant may even cause dermatitis or allergic reactions in sensitive people who touch it or inhale its pollen. Of course, the degree of poisoning depends upon the amount eaten, and the size, age and general health of the victim.

There are a number of documented human fatalities caused by eating or drinking jimsonweed, either by accident or foolish curiosity. One of the most recent cases involved a twenty-year-old southern California man who drank a potion of jimsonweed root with orange juice or milk mixed in a blender. According to a hospital spokesperson, he "died a horrendous death," involving severe hallucinations, convulsions and massive hemorrhaging. Indian medicine men understood and respected this powerful plant, and carefully monitored the dosage during puberty rituals.

Jimsonweed is a common Southwest plant with a fascinating ethnobotanical history. If people, particularly young experimenters in our drug culture, only knew of the horrible and agonizing death it can cause, they would never touch it; however, it is certainly not the only dangerously poisonous plant. There are numerous other very deadly plants that commonly grow wild in urban and rural areas, including castor bean, poison hemlock, water hemlock and death camas, as well as numerous cultivated plants such as oleander and autumn crocus. The recognition and understanding of potentially dangerous plants should be part of everyone's education. 



# FOR THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING **HOW ABOUT A PET TARANTULA?**



by Daniel Perez  
*photographs by the author*

**W**HEN A TARANTULA OWNER speaks of his pet to friends, their usual reaction is "Why would you *ever* want one of those for a pet?" or "Aren't they dangerous?" Although answers to the first question

vary from owner to owner, and the answer to the second is "Not particularly," these questions generalize some of the more common misconceptions about these unusual spiders and their probably equally unusual owners.

Tarantulas have nearly always been portrayed as evil, deadly creatures in books and movies. They are always found lurking in the "mad scientist's" laboratory, or growing to great size and terrorizing the countryside. It is

unfortunate that they have received all this bad press, for they have done little to earn it.

Perhaps the best way to get to know tarantulas is to know a few basics about spiders in general. As a member of the Phylum Arthropoda, and Class Arachnida, the spider is related to mites, scorpions and solpugids. The spider is not an insect, for an insect has three body divisions, six legs and two compound eyes. The spider has two body divisions (cephalothorax and

abdomen), eight legs and usually, six to eight eyes. The large spiders commonly referred to as tarantulas belong to the Family Theraphosidae.

Tarantulas are found in tropical, subtropical or desert environments. As a pet, the tarantula is quiet, clean, relatively easy to care for, and is guaranteed to stimulate a lot of conversation when viewed by family or friends.

You can purchase one from a pet store or capture it yourself. If you live near a



*desert area you may be fortunate enough to encounter tarantulas in the wild, though they are relatively rare and secretive. But if you do see one, it can be prodded into a coffee can or shoe box with little difficulty. Make sure, however, that the container is well ventilated.*

When purchasing a tarantula, try to locate a reputable dealer and then inspect your prospective pet carefully. Avoid any spiders possessing hooklike appendages on the inner joints of their front legs as these are males which have passed the mating stage, and will only live a few months. Immature males and female spiders may live several years.

Once you've acquired a specimen, your next project is to provide it with a home. A functional, attractive desert terrarium can be made with simple materials. A ten-gallon aquarium filled with an inch or two of sand or pea gravel is a good start. Arrange a few stones to provide a hideaway for the spider. Add a small dish of water, and perhaps a potted cactus or succulent, and your pet has a home. Remember, though, that tarantulas are accomplished escape artists, so make sure your terrarium has a secure, well-ventilated lid.

Caring for your spider consists of a few basic rituals which will keep your pet looking its best. Tarantulas feed primarily on insects, and sometimes on small lizards and mice. Common crickets are perhaps the best food for your pet. A large spider may eat one to two crickets a week in spring and summer months but during fall and on into winter, the spider's appetite will dwindle as it begins to enter a state of semi-hibernation. During this period of time, you should still make food available occasionally.

If a period of time goes by in which you are unable to obtain crickets or similar live foods, you may feed your spider small pieces of raw ground beef. To do this, simply mold a bit of the raw meat into a ball and compress it around the end of a length of thread. Dangle this near the spider's front legs and jiggle it. The spider will assume it is alive and seize it. Always provide fresh water for your pet, and place a small cube of sponge in the water dish. This allows the spider to drink without putting its head into the water. Keep your tarantula warm, for it will not eat when it is cold. The terrarium should be kept at approximately 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Whether you handle your spider or not will depend largely on your feelings toward it. If you are afraid of it, handling is not advised for you may be frightened into dropping the spider. This would probably prove fatal to your pet because tarantulas are very fragile, and cannot survive falls from any height. While handling your spider is by no means necessary and does not benefit the spider in any way, it may benefit you to become



**Tarantulas must be held firmly; a fall can easily kill them.**

more familiar with your pet.

For those who do prefer to handle their tarantulas, there are two methods. One is to simply place your hand in front of the spider and gently prod it from behind. It will then walk up onto your hand. Another way is to slowly grasp the spider on either side of the body between the second and third pair of legs. When you lift it, the spider will remain motionless.

Note that your tarantula will have two tiny claws at the tip of each leg. These claws are harmless, but you should not let the spider come in contact with cloth or any other material in which these claws could become entangled.

Many people fear that the tarantula has a deadly bite. While some spiders such as the brown recluse are very poisonous, the tarantula's bite is highly overrated. They rarely bite and if they do, the bite is about as severe, no more or less, as a bee sting. If your spider does bite you, don't panic; simply treat the wound like any other minor puncture wound. However, since some people may experience an allergic reaction to tarantula venom, a call to your physician may be wise. Many people have owned tarantulas for years and have never been bitten.

Your spider will probably moult at least once a year, the younger ones more frequently than adults. They often "play dead" during the moulting process by spinning a carpet of silk to lie on, and rolling onto their back. They'll remain

motionless for quite a while, and the entire process will take about 24 hours. Finally, the spider will shed its old, dingy skin for a darker, more attractive one.

Tarantulas are by nature very inactive. It is not unusual for a tarantula to sit motionless for days in the same spot. They are nocturnal, and therefore do most of their roaming around at night. Sometimes a female tarantula will lay eggs and construct an egg sac for them. These eggs are not fertile and will not hatch, but the female will guard them loyally. Handling is inadvisable at this time; she'll give up on the eggs in a few months.

There are several sources for information on tarantulas and tarantula care, one being your local zoo. They should have answers for many of your questions, and they might even arrange a demonstration of proper handling techniques. You might also write to the American Museum of Natural History. Finally, helpful books on tarantula care can be found in your local library or pet shop. Use these sources, for they will greatly enhance the enjoyment of your pet.

A tarantula may not be as cuddly as a puppy or as cute as a kitten, but it does possess a unique beauty and grace seldom found among so-called "exotic pets." Having one around the house may not be for everyone, but the person willing to put aside fears and misconceptions, and accept the creature on its own terms, will derive a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction. **Z**



**"I** FEEL LIKE I'M part of history," said Evelyn Vigil, and well she might. Seated at her work table at Pecos National Monument's Visitor Center, this modern-day potter from Jemez Pueblo was comparing her creation with an authentic piece of pottery from the pre-historic Pecos Pueblo, home of her ancestors. For her to have something, anything, to compare has taken a lot of work.

*Evelyn Vigil*

## HER TOUCH IS FOREVER

by LITA EMANUEL

For the past six summers, she has hauled tools to the deepest arroyos, boiled pungent weeds for days, wrestled with bulky wet clays and tested scores of native barks to recapture the clays and glazes of the past.

It's not an easy task to revive any portion of the culture of Pecos. Its history alone has been a challenging puzzle. Today Pecos is a magnificent ruin, carefully pampered as a national monument. But in the 1500s with a population of about 2,500, the area was a center of activity, a thriving multi-storied pueblo. Archaeologists say it may have been the largest city in what is now the United States. Located at the portal where the mountains meet the plains, Pecos was a cultural crossroads and center of trade for at least a century before Coronado's arrival in 1540.

During the 18th Century the town began to fade. By 1838 stillness had enveloped the pueblo as the last Pecos Indians, a pitiful remnant of seventeen men, left the community and joined a closely-related tribe of their kin at Jemez, far to the west beyond the Rio Grand Valley. (The Jemez were the only other Pueblo Indians who spoke the Towa language.)

Nobody knows for sure why the pueblo was deserted. Did its gateway location, the farthest west of the pueblos, leave it open to continual raids by the cavalry of the Plains Indians? Is it true that diseases brought by the white man decimated the population? Or could it be, as some say, that a "great sickness," a curse, overcame the people?

Whatever the cause, what was left were the soaring walls of the great, entire pueblo and its Franciscan mission, hidden caches of food, tools and other

artifacts, all yielding clues of the self-sufficient existence.

Since 1915 interesting archaeological investigations have been going on at Pecos, some 25 miles east of Santa Fe. Its restoration is now largely complete. In 1972, National Park Service officials began a cultural awareness program at the monument. But their concern reached far beyond preserving the pueblo. They wanted to reconstruct the cultural heritage of the area as well.

So began a search for reviving the ways of the past — the music, food, textiles, and pottery. A splendid idea. But a host of things made duplicating the beautiful pottery especially difficult. Using restored and dated pots as their models, several volunteers tried but could not come close to reproducing the thin-walled vessels with their shining, delicately painted glazes.

To this scene, add Evelyn Vigil of Jemez who can trace her ancestry to the Pecos survivors. Already a fine potter, Evelyn had a word-of-mouth reputation for her unusual willingness to experiment to find the old ways. A self-taught potter from the time she was a young teenager, she says, "I will try to tell the others not to use the colors we learn from the white man. I don't go for bright colors." She adds with a broad smile, "My daughters are making pottery now, and their daughters. They use the matte just like from before."

Arnold Herrera, Supervisory Ranger at Pecos and an American Indian from Cochiti Pueblo says, "In the Indian way, a pot is a living thing. It has a spirit all its own. Not many potters are willing to experiment, to chance seeing their work shatter in the firing. That's why Evelyn is unique.

The problem at Pecos fascinated

Evelyn. Besides, she was impressed with the quality of those precious early pieces. She decided to go to the Monument. "Why not? It must be done," she said.

And so for six summers the award-winning great-grandmother has spent each day searching for and analyzing clays, giving demonstrations and making sample pots.

"The first two years," Evelyn recalls, "I got nothing to come out. It was terrible. We lost every pot in the firing. I knew we didn't have the right clays."

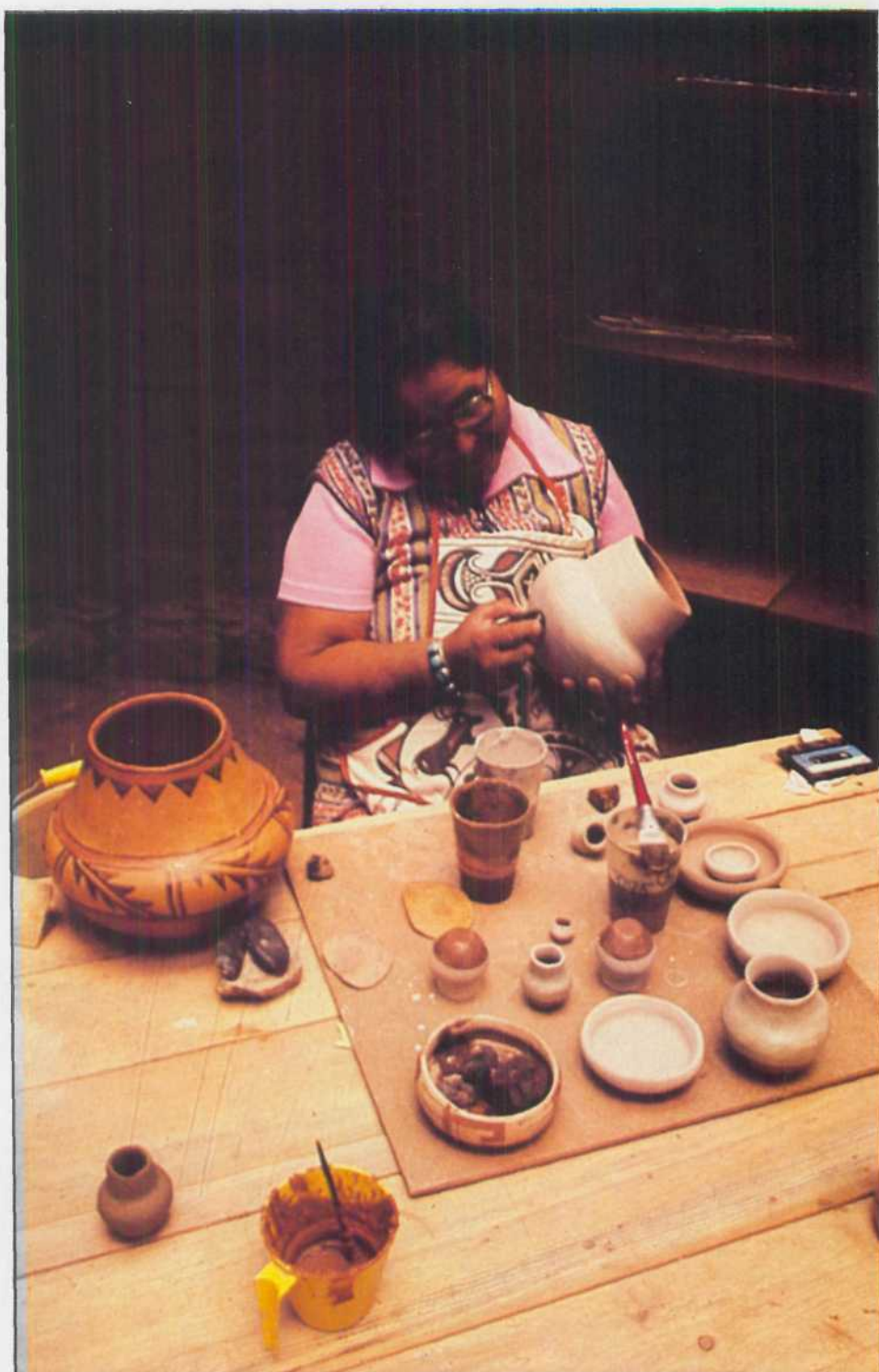
The methodical search continued. "Evelyn touched, smelled, licked and tasted the clays," Arnold remembers. And each day she wrote down what clays she used, where she found them, quite an impressive and detailed account. She then baked the clays to test their color, texture and strength.

One day, in the scorching heat of the summer of 1978, Evelyn once again wandered through the pinyon-dotted slopes of the Pecos determined to unlock the secrets of times past. "Something, I don't know what, maybe the color, drew me to an arroyo I hadn't been to before. In a flash," she says, "I had the whole thing. I couldn't get my breath. And when I did, I yelled to everyone, 'hey, over here. I found it!' I just kept laughing and crying." And with that, all the steps started falling into place.

Once the clay of her choice, a sandstone, has been dug and hauled back to the work area, it is laboriously ground fine. The pulverized clay is moistened and kneaded to the proper consistency. "You have to learn how to mix it. You don't look, you feel." Satisfied, she starts to mold it.

First, the base is molded. Next, in age-old Pueblo fashion, ropes of clay are





Evelyn Vigil strives to perfect in painstaking detail the traditional art of the Pecos potter. Some say she's succeeded but she's a perfectionist, and insists there's still more work to be done.

rolled between her hands. Then, while turning the vessel slowly, she lays coil on coil, pressing them fast together, dampening the surface just enough to let them adhere. When the walls have been built to size, they are shaped, thinned and modeled. The shapes are as varied as the early pottery: two-handled pieces, tall graceful jars, cylindrical vessels, bowls, plates and delicate miniature pots.

Next, slip, a thin wash of fine clay is applied. "If the slip isn't right, these thin pots will crumble," explains Evelyn. She gestures, "The red slip is from a half-mile away. And the white comes

from an arroyo over there on the mesa top."

While the slip is still damp, the pot is polished with small well-worn pebbles.

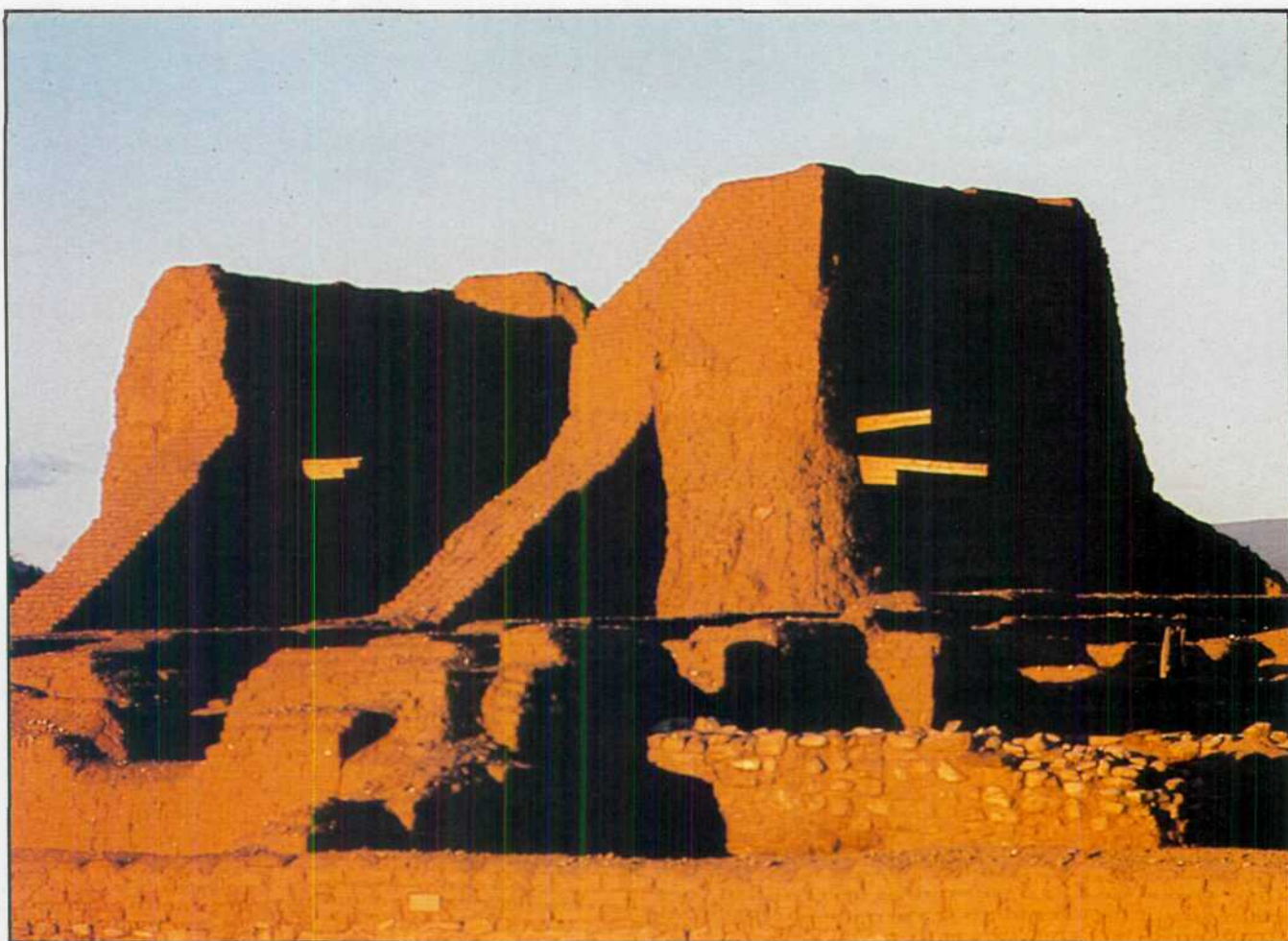
It's time for the glaze. "The main thing with the glaze," Evelyn goes on, "is guaco." Guaco is the substance that holds the color to the pots. "You start with a huge pot and you fill it with mustard weed. The weed is boiled and stirred, boiled and stirred. In the end, maybe three days, you get just a little piece." The guaco is removed and placed on a corn husk to dry in the sun. A few hours, maybe a day or two.

Finally, to prepare the glaze, the brittle piece of guaco is soaked in water. Using a brush of yucca leaf she chews at the end to make bristles, Evelyn paints the stylized, abstract designs freehand. That's the old Pecos style.

In the old style too, Evelyn does her firing. That is, on the ground, outdoors. Unlike other Pueblo potters who use manure to increase the fire's heat, Evelyn chooses to use heaping mounds of fir bark in this critical stage of pottery-making.

The vessels are placed in a circle upside-down upon hunks of adobe bricks





around the fire, then covered with a layer of pot sherds (fragments). The sherds keep the pottery from smudging.

Now Evelyn watches the wind as well as the fire. "Too much is a bad sign," she observes. "It breaks your heart when the wind comes up and breaks a piece. Then you must know if it was the wind, or was it perhaps the wrong clay?"

An obvious question is how do you know when the pieces are done? "We never look at the time. We don't have such a thing. We just know." And the beautiful red-hot pottery she removes from the fire is neither under- nor over-fired.

Though she has an agile sense of humor and an easy manner, Evelyn's a perfectionist when creating her pottery. Others are certain she has found the exact clays to reproduce the "Pecos pots" of long ago. But Evelyn insists there is still more work to be done. Her pottery isn't as thin as she would like. Why does she persist? She says simply, "It just must be done. And if I didn't do it, it wouldn't be me."

Suddenly, a wide smile illuminates her face. "Look, over there!" She points towards a nearby mesa. "The archaeologists have uncovered a new site. So many new pots. And such huge pots, mostly black-on-white. I wonder what they used," she muses. "I must get busy looking for it. Why not?"



Evelyn Vigil's studio (top photograph) is in the Visitor's Center at Pecos National Monument, 25 miles east of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her research started with ancient Pecos pottery found and restored (photograph above) by National Park Service archaeologists.



# A SHORT HISTORY OF NATIVE INDIAN JEWELRY-A VANISHING DESERT ART

Somewhere West of Denver, and South of the Great Salt Lake, an old man sits in the morning desert sun, patiently grinding bits of coral and turquoise into tiny hescke beads. Although he's old, and as wrinkled as the canyoned hills that surround his pole hogan, his craft is older. When the Spaniards, relative late-comers to the Indian country, brought the coral from their sea voyages, silver had long been mined in the hills, or traded out of old Mexico. And precious turquoise and bits of shell had been tribal currency for centuries.



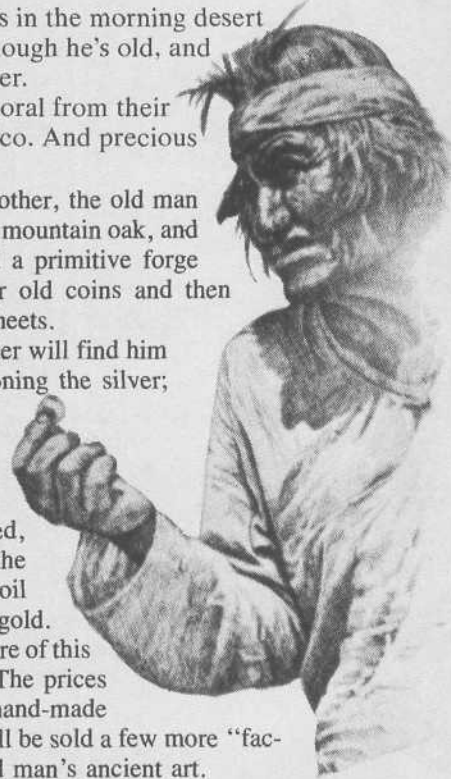
Later this day, or perhaps another, the old man will build a hot fire of pinon and mountain oak, and with crude leather bellows and a primitive forge smelt down lumps of silver or old coins and then hammer them into thin silver sheets.

Cold nights of the desert winter will find him before his fire, patiently fashioning the silver; filing, shaping and soldering until he has formed tiny intricate fixtures and ornaments to complement the summer's hescke beads. When he's finished, astute collectors will count the product of his patient ancient toil worth more than its weight in gold.

He will die soon, and a bit more of this ancient art will die with him. The prices will rise a bit more for the hand-made pieces, and the unsuspecting will be sold a few more "factory" pieces in place of the old man's ancient art.

Of such sad events are values made. And the wise person today buys value with beauty when possible.

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# FLOATING THE

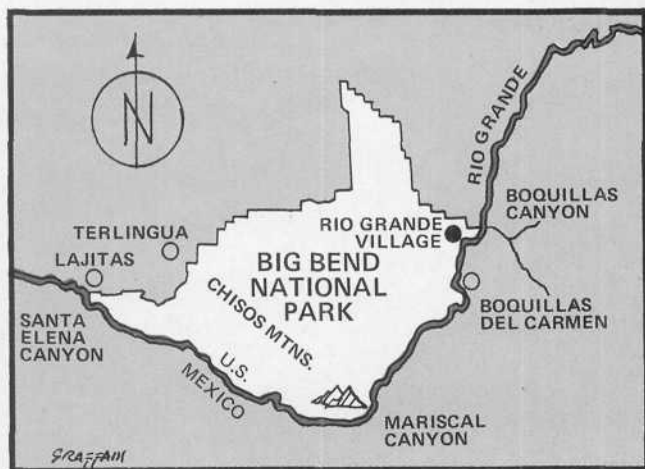
*The Unconventional  
Doorway to the Backcountry  
of Big Bend National Park*

by

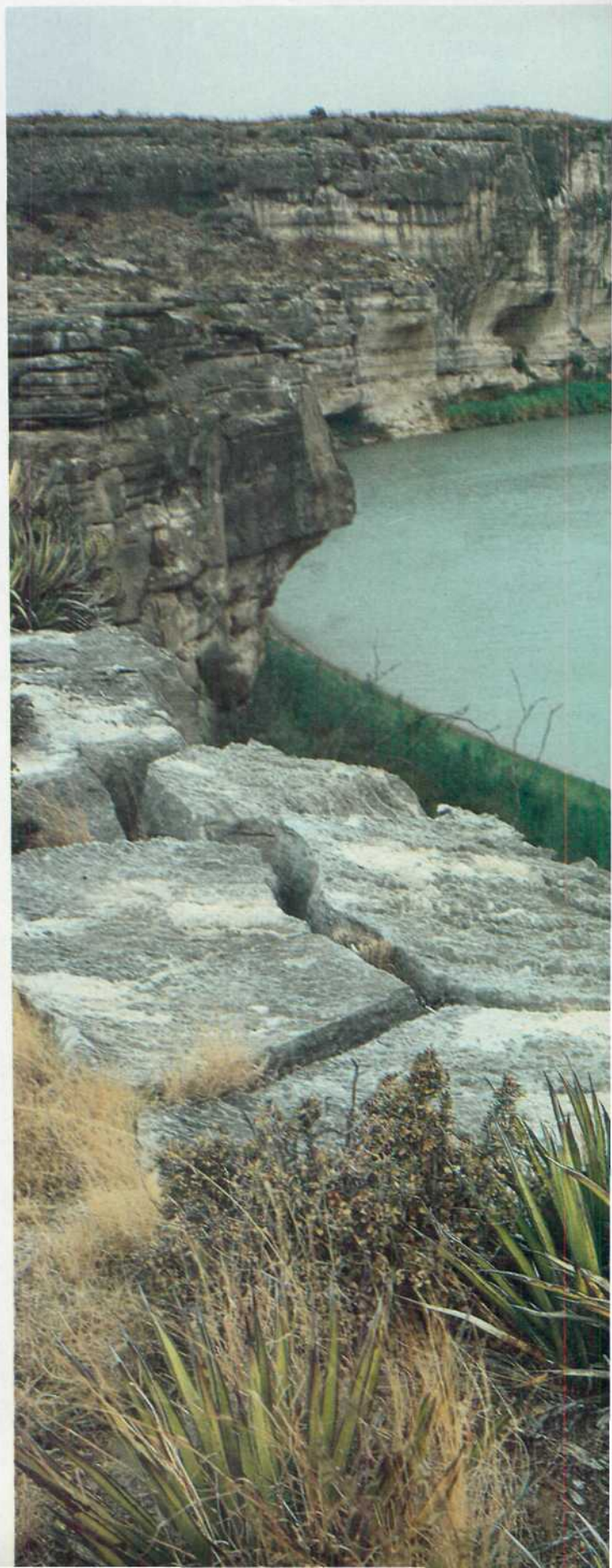
MICHAEL ANDERSON

Sound and movement build in the distance like the melancholy wail of a faraway freight. The wind approaches with a roar and bursts upon camp, billowing the tent into a heaving nylon lung. Dissipating to a whisper, the haunting call begins again. Ebb and flow from dusk till after midnight leaves a film of sand over bodies and gear.

Any desert camp is prey to the breath of sand-bearing gusts, but the funneling action of a rivercourse imparts a sense of nature angered. On the Rio Grande edging Big Bend National Park, where the meandering ribbon of water is flanked by endless miles of scorched earth, hot air is sucked into the cooler path of the river and rages in either direction. We were to weather three nights on the river, thankful for the riparian setting in the daytime but dreading the onslaught sure to come down the slot by nightfall.



*For all of its tumultuous history, the Rio Grande is a placid river in Big Bend country.*





# *RIO GRANDE*

DAVID MUENCH



D19



*Big Bend is a massive chunk of Chihuahuan Desert, parted from Mexico by the undecided wandering of 100 miles of Rio Grande. A variety of desert environments are found here, ranging from the blistering backcountry at river level to the cool pine country of the Chisos Mountains, but it was the river and its passage into otherwise unattainable terrain that brought us. We found our gateway at the border ghost of Castolon.*

The ranger station rests among the reconstructed buildings of this village that recalls the turn of the century and Pancho Villa. Glancing across the river to Santa Elena, it's not hard to imagine mounted revolutionaries splashing through the border to "requisition" supplies from the *gringos*. A permit to float the river is easily obtained from the ranger, who is more concerned that we have a good time than with loading us down with regulations. Rules are few, the foremost being "use your head." The parking lot next to the ranger residence is but 100 yards from shore and is as secure a trailhead as I have ever found.

Once launched into the mainstream, we quickly learn that the Rio Grande, uncertain about its destination, could go either way. At best we waft downstream at the pace of a snail, the current displaying an energy equal to the ferryman we saw whose posture — knees pressed against head and chest — is the siesta stereotype (why he lounged on the American side while his ferry rested on the Mexican shore will always puzzle me). More than once we laid back to soak up some sun abreast a sand bar or half-sunken snag only to look up a few minutes later to stare at the same landmark. The Rio Grande is not a mover.

My enjoyment of the desert is often achieved through a land's contrasts and ironies. A thread of water through topography like this is both ironic and contrasting in the same glance. Saltcedar and grassy canes, larger members of which can respire 100 gallons of moisture

a day, are the foreground to mountains so parched and to intervening basins so sun-beaten they squirm naked through noontime thermals. Texas bluebonnets among other wildflowers luxuriate within thirty yards of water-starved sage and blackbush. Silted mud is caked beside fine granules of sand that taste of the river only at flood stage. Collared and whiptail lizards share space with turtles, otters and waterfowl. A golden eagle surveys this varied domain from a lifeless tree trunk while opportunistic turkey vultures move in lazy circles, coincidentally drifting with the raft. The incongruities are as extensive as the river that inspires them.

The channel is often fifteen to twenty feet below the surrounding land, limiting vision to the waterflow and a few yards either way. This inspires thoughts of drifting by lost civilizations just over the ridge and frequent landings to determine our location. A scramble up a nearby hill may reveal a flood-gutted arroyo, a range of hills, or a flatland still and forbidding. More often than not the thought of a hike is quickly vetoed, but when map and dead reckoning occasionally agree on the position of a homesteader's cabin, exploration is immediate.

These structures are simple extensions of the landscape — stacked stone walls emerging from a scattered stone desert floor with roofs of wood, grass and mud. All cling to the life-giving river like iron particles to a magnet. At their creation they allowed minimum shelter amid a few head of cattle and dismal gardens; in their ruin they are monuments to people who valued a penetrating solitude over capital gain.

There is little whitewater on the Rio Grande, but each of the three canyons within the Park display interesting rapids. Our put-in just below Santa Elena Canyon and take-out just above Boquillas leaves only Mariscal Canyon for us to run. Mariscal isn't reached until the third day of the float. The previous two days on a veritable waterbed have lulled us and rusted our judgment of rapids, enough so that we tumble

through the two major chutes out of control. The falls are more exhilarating than dangerous, however. Their passage is entry to the intimate beauty of confining cliffs that tower above the now placid water. The price of the scenery is the effort to row through it; nearly the entire lower canyon is a lake, moving imperceptively.

Nights in this country as previously described are poor reward for weary days in water-reflected heat, but the evenings are a bonus. Camped among stone ruins on a sandy bluff, we blend with the pulse of the watercourse. A mourning dove pipes in its soothing song. Cliff swallows swoop in and out of adobe nests beneath riverside ledges while a scarlet crested and breasted vermilion flycatcher splashes color on a drab tamarisk. A pair of herons gaze motionless at the sun disappearing amid western hills. Heavy with the dust that is on its way to plague us, a darkening sky samples the spectral range from fiery pink through the gray of night.

Somewhere along the fourth day out, human activity began to presage our arrival at Rio Grande Village. Several couples basked in peace at the gravel pit five miles upstream. Two miles further down, the ghost site of Hot Springs, Texas entertained bathers in the crumbling tubs near shore. Noise levels increased as people pierced the vegetation to wet a line, stalk the shoreline or stare at the ripples. Near the village we encountered four young folks strolling naked on the sand.

With all these signs and the sighting of cottonwoods inland from the north bank, it's hard to pass up the takeout point. If one were to miss it, the unmistakable entrance to Boquillas Canyon another mile downstream would surely warn all but the blind that it's time to pull out.

At Rio Grande Village, with all the amenities to provide a comfortable rest after a tiring adventure, I had to first reconcile our position with that of our van sixty miles away. In Big Bend country, begging a ride proved no problem at all.

## THINGS THE FLOATER SHOULD KNOW:

Raft rentals are available at Lajitas, 43 miles west of the park on Highway 170, (915) 371-2234, and at Villa de la Mina, 33 miles west on the same highway, (915) 371-2446.


Temperatures are warm October through March, unbearable in other months. Call ahead to the park for river conditions.

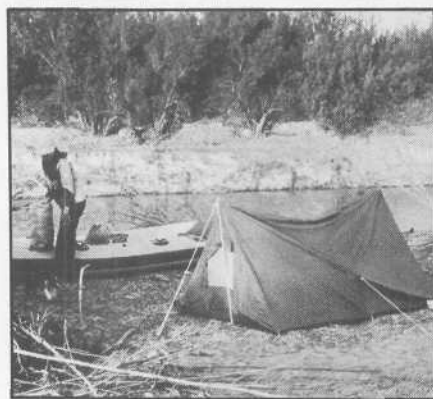
Park topographical maps are available at Panther Junction, and

may be available at the ranger station at Castolon.

The primitive river road depicted on the park maps can be used to reach shortened put-in and take-out points (Talley and Solis are commonly used). The road is rough; not recommended for passenger cars.

There are no dependable freshwater sources along the Rio Grande. Carry four days supply, minimum.

All services are available at Rio Grande Village. A few supplies and gas are found at Castolon but for what it's worth, the single gas pump was broken when we passed through. 



*Open campsites like this invite wind-borne problems on the Rio Grande*





*Crude scribings in Latin on this artifact show name, "Terra Calalus," and date.*

# TERRA CALALUS, U.S.A.

(775-900 A.D.)

**W**OULD YOU BELIEVE THAT ARIZONA HAD A ROMAN KING IN 900 A.D., 592 YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS sighted the New World?

If you would, you could be in good company. A prominent Tucson attorney, a renowned

BY CHORAL PEPPER





# THE WORDS INSCRIBED IN LATIN ON THE CROSS TOLD AN INCREDIBLE TALE.

University of Arizona archaeologist, an accomplished linguist and a number of geologists took that stand in a controversy that raged internationally from 1924 to 1927.

The incident that set it off occurred on a fine autumn afternoon when Charles Manier of Tucson took a visiting relative for a drive along Silverbell Road on the fringe of the city to see some old Spanish lime kilns. When they walked through an open cut that led from the high bank where the kilns lay down to the road, the visiting gentleman tapped a protrusion from the bank with the metal tip of his cane. The resulting ring of metal hitting metal peaked Manier's curiosity. Anxious to impress his guest from the East with an early Spanish relic, he returned to his car for the trench shovel and pick desert dwellers customarily carried in their trunks in those days and proceeded to hack the object out of the tough caliche in which it was embedded.

What it turned out to be was a 65-pound lead cross. Manier subsequently learned that the old kilns were on property homesteaded by Thomas Bent, a young Tucson attorney, so he took the object to Bent as a matter of both obligation and interest.

When the two men had cleaned off the dirt and examined the cross together, they discovered that it was actually two crosses pegged face-to-face with lead dowels and coated with beeswax. Carefully they separated them and removed the wax. Under the coating they were astonished to find crudely printed Latin inscriptions with drawings and dates.

This cross was the first in a series of mysterious artifacts found on the site — objects soon to unleash a tempest in the archaeological world. Dr. Byron Cummings, one of the nation's most highly respected archaeologists who had specialized in Arizona's pre-history, hastened back from an expedition in Mexico to supervise a dig on Bent's property. The *New York Times* ran a front page story with banner headlines on the find.

Dr. Cummings rated the artifacts with the Rosetta stone. Dr. Bashford Dean, Curator of Arms and Armor of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, who did not personally examine it, labeled the find a hoax. Neil Merton Judd, Curator of American Archaeology of the United States National Museum believed them authentic, but thought the date later than that of the Spanish conquest of 1540 A.D. Dr. C.J. Sarla, a prominent geologist, concluded that the objects had been embedded in the caliche for a few centuries before they were discovered, but would not hazard an estimate as to how many. Leandro Ruiz, a retired Mexican cattleman, suggested that they were created and

buried by the son of a Mexican emigrant who had lived on the Bent property in the 1890s. Dean G.M. Butler of the College of Mines and Engineering at the University of Arizona declared that there was no chance whatever that the objects were introduced into the caliche formation during the time Americans had occupied this section of the country.

Before the academicians were through arguing the matter pro and con, reputations had been tarnished, professional careers vilified, honest men ridiculed, hearts broken.

The truth about the Roman artifacts still is not known.

As a writer, my interest in them peaked when I received an answer to my query from the University of Arizona. "We would like to forget about them," the department head wrote.

Why, I wondered, would the University duck the issue? Isn't the object of an educational institution to learn the truth?

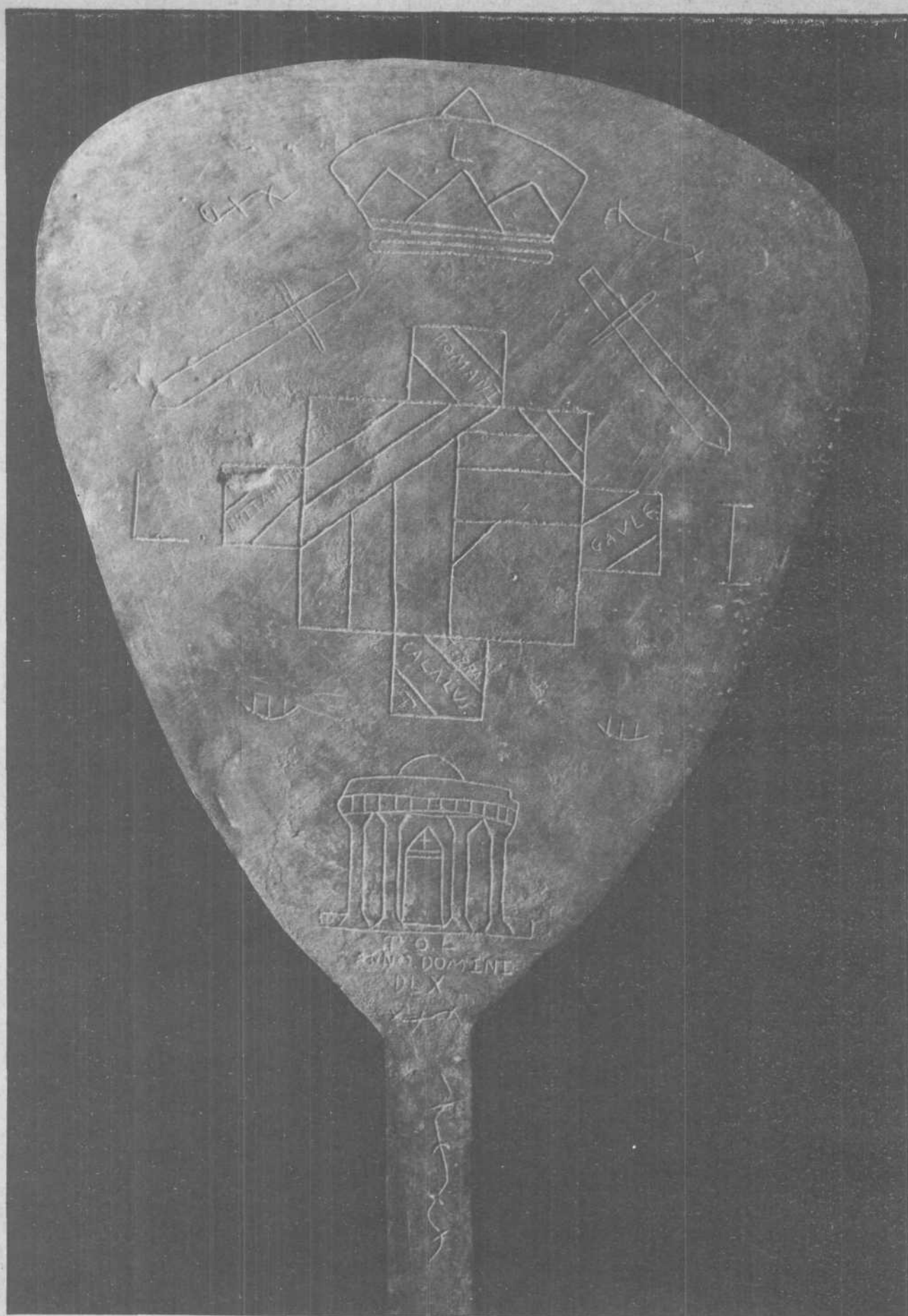
**W**HEN I FINALLY HAD TRACED THE LATE THOMAS BENT TO HIS RETIREMENT RESIDENCE IN SAN DIEGO AND convinced him that I was not attempting an expose based upon preconceived ideas, he agreed to an interview. I believed then, and still do, that his interest lay only in learning the truth about the artifacts — not in trying to prove that they were something they were not. Enough expert opinions had been presented to satisfy him that they should not be taken lightly.

When I interviewed Bent in 1968, he was 70 years old. He was so mentally and physically alert that he could have been a decade younger. He told me that upon medical advice resulting from lung damage in World War I, he had moved to Tucson in the early 1920s to set up a law practice. At that time land was being offered by the government for homesteading on the outskirts of Tucson. A number of veterans who believed in the future growth of the city invested, Bent among them.

The discovery of the Roman artifacts on his particular homestead came as a bonus — not in monetary value, but in the intellectual stimulation he initially enjoyed in working with students and staff of the University of Arizona.

When a university takes on a new project, a certain amount of publicity is inevitable. Funds must be justified and budgeted. Costs must be estimated. Those privately consulted about the Roman artifacts anticipated the world-shaking controversy that resulted. Thus, it was suggested that the University find a way to finance the preliminary work without fanfare so that when the news did break, a wealth of





*Round building scribed near handle or stem of this artifact seems Roman/Byzantine in style rather than anything Spanish.*





## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ROMAN ARTIFACTS STILL IS NOT KNOWN

cross, a crescent cross, spear fragments, a labarum and an inscribed piece of caliche.

**T**HE WORDS INSCRIBED IN LATIN ON THE INITIAL CROSS TOLD AN INCREDIBLE TALE ABOUT A FLEET OF SHIPS carrying 700 Romans under the leadership of one Theodorus the Renowned that set sail from Rome in the year 775 A.D. After passing through the Straits of Hercules, they ran into a series of heavy storms. Caught adrift when the storms subsided, the fleet sailed together for many weeks before land was sighted, perhaps the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. The survivors then abandoned ship and set forth on foot toward the northwest through dangerous terrain until they finally came to rest on a warm desert with an adequate water supply. It was here, presumably the Tucson area, that Theodorus directed his followers to settle permanently and build a city named Terra Calalus.

During ensuing years, the Romans captured local natives known as Toltezus and forced them into slavery. After a time, however, the natives rebelled and razed the city, killing Theodorus.

The survivors eventually regained control and rebuilt their city, this time under the leadership of one Jacobus, who subsequently was succeeded by another leader, Israel. Israel I was in turn followed by seven more by the same name who ruled for a total of 125 years. The natives then revolted again and it was Israel VII who, when his battle weapon was shattered by a stone axe, ordered his scribe to imprint the story of Terra Calalus upon the lead cross recovered many centuries later by Manier.

With a story like that, refuting all of the textbook evidence about Christopher Columbus discovering America, it is understandable that some of the "experts" took exception.

On the other hand, certain corroborating evidence couldn't be ignored. Assays and analyses were made of the metal. Lead seemed an unsubstantial material for weaponry, until someone suggested that perhaps the swords were merely ceremonial. All but two of the objects were composed of a natural alloy of local origin, containing lead and antimony with traces of tin, gold and silver. The two exceptions, both of superior workmanship, contained copper classified as similar to ore found near Bisbee. And, lead alloys usually possess radioactivity when first prepared, but this disappears with age. There was no trace of radioactivity.

The articles were removed from a stratified hillside at depths from five to six feet. Above them, excavators found pre-Columbian stone knives and pottery.

Above these, near the surface, lay Indian arrowheads and flint knives of the 19th Century. One geologist stated that if the articles had been washed by floods into the locations in which they were found at the same time as accompanying layers of sand and gravel, they would have been deposited before 560 A.D., the earliest date of the artifacts. But then, this was disputed by Dr. Sarla's data mentioned above.

And that was the way it went. While one expert argued that certain Latin phrases were "right out of a Latin textbook," another retorted, "Naturally, that was the phraseology of the time." While the first complained that some of the inscriptions made little sense, the second argued that a generation or more had passed since the Colony had left Rome and it was losing its knowledge of how to write. Others pointed out that a knowledge of both Christianity and Hebrew was not uncommon to the Mediterranean area of that time.

While scholars argued pro and con, a more pressing matter was occupying the minds of the University of Arizona's administrators. A new president of the University had been appointed and the academic hierarchy was being turned over completely. Dr. Cummings was relieved of his faculty position and replaced, along with other department heads who had worked on the Roman artifact project, by professors aligned with the new regime. Suddenly the Roman artifact project became politically unpopular. Cummings was ridiculed as being naive and gullible. Bent was accused of fostering a swindle when he offered the artifacts to the University in return for out-of-pocket expenses he had borne during preliminary excavations which he had financed in order to keep the discovery quiet until scientific judgement could be passed.

Where are the artifacts now? When Bent was alive he had them stashed in a safe place, hoping that eventually someone would volunteer to sponsor an open-minded, scientific evaluation unfettered by academic jealousies. He had privately published a full report in book form which he distributed to various foundations and colleges, but none ever presented an adequately funded program for continued research.

It is my understanding that Bent's son in Tempe, Arizona is the present custodian of the articles. He is reported to have been harassed by information seekers almost beyond endurance. Whether or not more artifacts remain buried on the site in Tucson is a matter of speculation. Bent always believed that more awaited recovery.

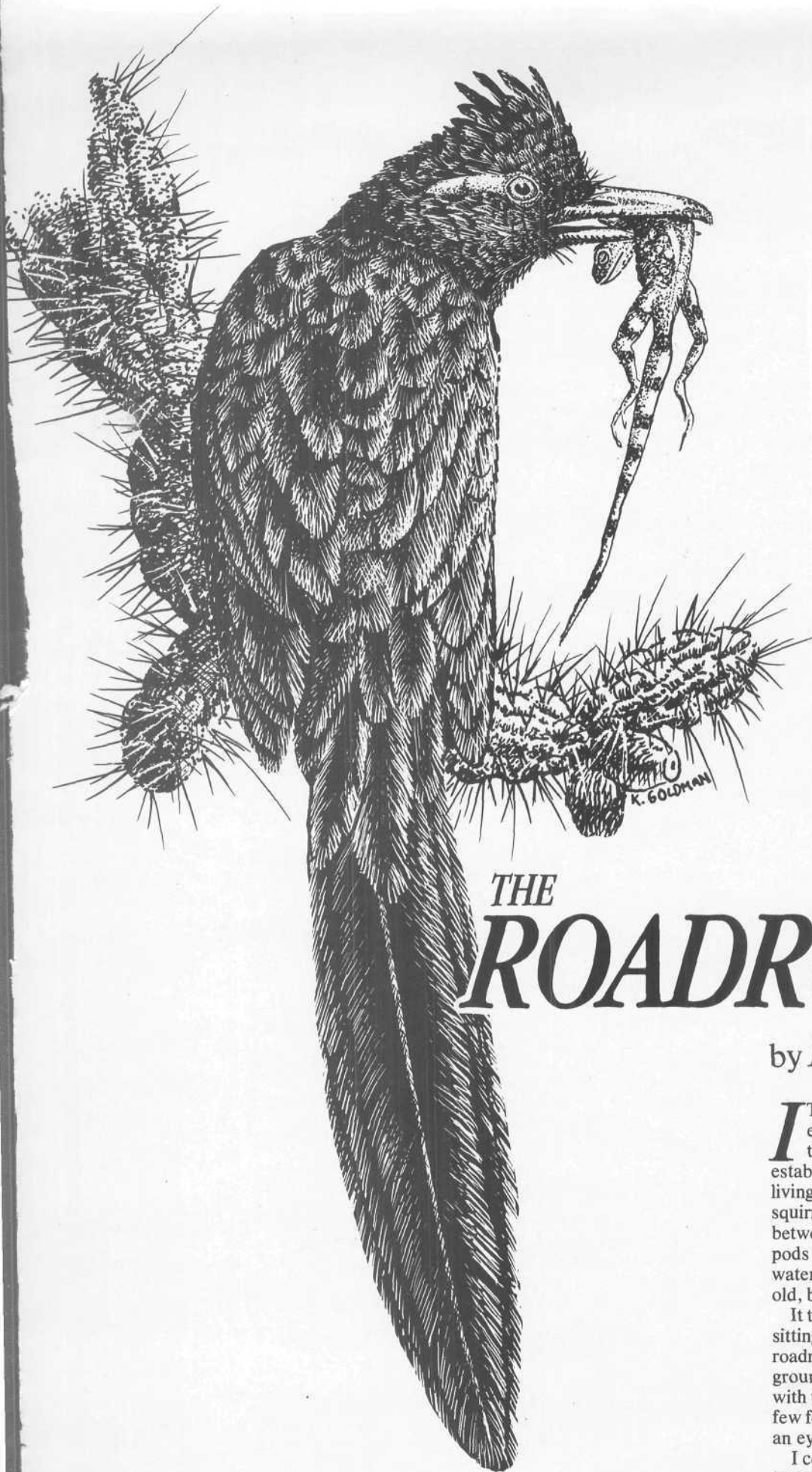
In the meantime, the birth and demise of Terra Calalus, U.S.A. remains a mystery. **Z**

confirming evidence would be available.

Bent offered to personally bear this expense. An agreement was struck. Should the artifacts turn out to have great value, Bent would share to a limited degree in the profit with the University when they were sold to museums. Should they have no value, he would be reimbursed for his out-of-pocket expenses in financing the labor of digging and the hiring of necessary equipment. That the University would fail to ever come to a definitive conclusion was not even considered.

The artifacts found on Bents' property numbered 32 in all. Besides the original large cross, they included smaller crosses, swords, spearheads, a serpent





*Clown  
Prince  
of the  
Desert*

# THE ROADRUNNER

by Karen Sausman

**I**T WAS A WARM summer day in early June. Young quail followed their parents to the small pond I had established about thirty feet from my living room window. Juvenile ground squirrels came scampering in to drink between periods of harvesting the seed pods on the many native plants near the water hole. About four feet away was an old, broad ocotillo.

It took me a moment to realize that, sitting stonestill at its very base, was a roadrunner almost flattened to the ground. The quail and other birds, along with the squirrels, often passed within a few feet of him, yet he never flickered an eye.

I couldn't imagine that he was going to just sit there with all that potential prey moving around in front of him.







Suddenly, when there was a large group of birds around the water hole, he charged and the birds flew up like popcorn escaping out of a lidless popper. Squirrels chattered and dived under the bushes. The roadrunner came up empty-beaked. He looked around and then walked back to the ocotillo and became a motionless pile of brown feathers once again. Within a few minutes the birds slowly returned to the area. The squirrels went back about their business. He repeated the performance.

It occurred to me after watching the attack a second time that he really didn't seem to be trying very hard to catch anything. Indeed, as the afternoon went by and his performance went on and on, I began to see that it was all some kind of elaborate game he had invented for his own amusement. At one time he did manage to chase a young ground squirrel up the hill next to the water hole and, grabbing it by the tail, he flicked it down the hill. The squirrel scurried back up again only to be flicked back down. This went on three or four times until the squirrel decided it may be best to take off in the opposite direction and he was left alone. With the departure of the squirrel, the roadrunner got more and more brazen. He charged everything that came to the water hole, managing to dominate the area for most of the afternoon.

It occurred to me that I might go and chase him off but surprisingly, I didn't have to worry. A male Gambel quail, followed by a brood of chicks, attempted to come to the water hole and the roadrunner made his dash. The chicks scattered but the male quail didn't retreat very far. The roadrunner stopped, the

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*Roadrunner sunning registers automatic disapproval of the world around it, photographers included.*

quail stopped, and then the quail lowered his head, opened his wings, puffed his body feathers and charged. He landed squarely on top of the roadrunner and started pecking and beating on him unmercifully. The cocky roadrunner was thoroughly humbled. He beat a hasty retreat across the open area with the quail buffeting him from behind, and so ended the roadrunner's afternoon of fun and games.

Roadrunners (*Geococcyx californianus*) are one of four members of the Cuckoo Family found within the United States. The others are the yellow-billed cuckoo, the black-billed cuckoo and the groove-billed ani. These are rarer species than our desert roadrunner.

Roadrunners are common throughout the open and dry brush country of the desert southwest. Indeed, their range extends from eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Louisiana down into central Mexico. In the west they can be found from northern California and southern Nevada through southern Utah, central Colorado and even southwestern Kansas.

Wherever they're found, they have (and, indeed, seem to enjoy having) the reputation of being the clown prince of the desert, and certainly part of this results from their appearance. They are almost two feet long from their loosely hinged tail to their large bill, which is capable of grabbing a variety of prey. A thin neck supports a head topped with a raggedy crest. Elliot Coues, a famous ornithologist, described the roadrunner best back in 1903. He called them "singular birds — cuckoos compounded of a chicken and a magpie."

This singular bird has a variety of common names including chapparal cock, ground cuckoo, churca and corracamino but roadrunner he is to most of us because that's what he's known for — originally perhaps alongside horses and now occasionally pacing automobiles. Roadrunners travel primarily by running; their short, rounded wings are not meant for flying. They have especially adapted feet which have two toes pointed forward and two toes pointing backward while other birds have feet with three forward and one backward.

Their habit of racing alongside vehicles has raised many questions as to how fast roadrunners can actually travel. Research indicates they have no trouble reaching speeds of up to fifteen miles per hour and probably, if pressed, they could hit twenty for short bursts. Again, this is running. Ornithologist George Miksch Sutton says "every roadrunner is remarkable but not when he is flying — a flying roadrunner is as much out of his element as a swimming chicken." His long tail is used as a balance, and he can change direction and even execute U-turns by flicking his tail as a

counterbalance. Mexicans often call him *paisano*, their "friend" who runs along the road with them.

Roadrunners are carnivorous, consuming a wide variety of food ranging from insects to young birds and birds' eggs. They are capable of dispatching lizards, small mammals and snakes, including rattlesnakes, the latter having fostered several stories about how they catch rattlesnakes. The most bizarre of these has them creating a fence of cactus spines around the sleeping rattlesnake. The spines are supposed to keep the rattlesnake from moving away, the idea being that the rattlesnake will eventually, out of desperation, impale himself on the spines or bite himself to death.

That conjecture is interesting but it is not how the roadrunner catches a snake. Usually the bird, using his incredible agility, darts in and out until he is able to grab the snake by the head. He then quickly pounds the head and body of the snake on the ground until it is lifeless. This behavior is also seen with any of the larger prey that roadrunners may attempt to take. Insect prey like grasshoppers are

## Research indicates they have no trouble reaching speeds of up to fifteen miles per hour—running!

often caught in mid-air. Roadrunners move quietly forward and then make a rush at the grasshopper, frightening it into flight where it is then snatched out of the air.

Because roadrunners do prey on young birds, including quail, many people prefer not to have them around. But like all of our wildlife, every species has a role to play and, while roadrunners do indeed take a few young birds, they also consume tremendous numbers of insects which these same people would consider pests. So, the roadrunner should be left to earn his living in peace, whatever his prey. In fact, most states have laws which protect him from any form of persecution, including hunting.

While the roadrunner's food includes lizards, small snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, spiders and centipedes, mice and even fruit, those that live wild at the Living Desert Reserve have learned to eat a commercial bird-of-prey diet which normally is fed to hawks and owls on exhibit. Roadrunners come to the door of the Animal Care Center and by rattling

their mandibles together, beg for food. They are adept at catching round balls of bird-of-prey diet, and newcomers soon learn to follow the animal care staff around begging for food. Many desert residents have semi-tame roadrunners that visit their homes on a regular basis. With patience, they can be taught to take food right from one's hand.

Roadrunners nest in the Spring. They build a rather shallow cup, usually only a few feet off the ground in a low tree or thicket. At the Living Desert Reserve they have been known to build their nests in the lower fronds of the fan palm. The nests are about a foot in diameter and six to eight inches high, and are lined with leaves, grass and feathers. As many as twelve eggs have been found in one nest, but the usual quota is three to six. The whitish eggs are laid at intervals, and incubation begins as soon as the first few are deposited. It takes approximately eighteen days for an egg to hatch. In any given nest you may find eggs, newly hatched young and half-grown young as a result of the varying intervals of egg laying.

The newly hatched young are featherless black creatures, about the size of young chickens but with a longer bill. When the young are nearly full-grown they begin to follow the adults around begging for food even though at that age they are capable of catching their own prey. The young take on the brown-streaked plumage of the adult bird by the end of their first Fall. There is bare skin around the eye, part of which is pale blue, and then next to the eye it is bright orange. This coloring is found in both male and female roadrunners. Adult males, at the height of breeding season, are resplendent with their steel blue crest, bright eye, and bright orange patch.

Roadrunners make a variety of sounds, perhaps the most common being a castinet-like clacking of their beak. However, they also have a territorial cooing sound that sounds very similar to a song of a ground dove.

At the Reserve it is not uncommon to find most all of the roadrunners engaged in a morning sunbath almost every day. They stand with their backs toward the sun and erect the back feathers. The skin on their back is black. When exposed, it quickly absorbs the heat from the morning sun.

Roadrunners have very few natural enemies. Predatory birds and some mammals occasionally might prey upon the adult birds, and snakes may take the young out of the nests. Unfortunately, their greatest danger is from man who often persecutes roadrunners because of their habit of eating quail.

The roadrunner is a fascinating and lively addition to any desert environment, domestic or wild. Take the time to watch and enjoy him. And, please, consider him a friend. **Z**



THE CACTUS CITY

# Clarion

THE NOSIEST NEWSPAPER IN THE WEST  
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## SANTA ROSA FOREST BLOSSOMS FORTH WITH PAINTED TREES

by Ernie Maxwell

Idyllwild, Calif. — About twenty miles south of here and high on a mountain top is a small forest overlooking Coachella Valley. It is a colorful site with rose sage, evergreens and a wide variety of rocks. Even the trunks of mature trees have special colors.

They are bright. That's the way the paint was applied decades ago by "Desert" Steve Ragsdale, once owner of the Santa Rosa Mountain summit. Today, fresh colors have been applied, but just who is retracing words spelled out by Ragsdale is known to only a few persons.

"The painters want to remain anonymous. They think it's right to restore Ragsdale's work," said a U.S. Forest Service patrolman who covers the area. That statement, however, is not the Service's official position. The signs may be eradicated and the well-

meaning culprits prosecuted.

What was Steve Ragsdale's message? It was fire prevention, something he was apparently obsessed with after disastrous wild fires swept near his 7,000 foot-high perch in 1944 and 1945. A man of strong opinions, the founder of Desert Center wasn't timid about expressing his beliefs.

After the fires he began painting messages on scarred pines and cedars located on and near his property. Through the years they became faint and almost invisible. Old timers remember them, and to make certain a newer generation gets the point, anonymous painters have recently rehabilitated Ragsdale's proclamations. Examples:

"LIKE WAR TO U FIRE TO ME A TREE IS DEATH." Again, "TO MAN AND TREE I SAY TO THEE BEWARE OF FIRE IT'S KILLING ME." A large boulder near the top has this to say: "NO! ROCKS WON'T BURN BUT TREES AND MEN WILL!"

Whoever is doing the restoration knows something about lettering. While there is little punctuation, the letters are all in clear, professional capitals.

It is possible the painters used a Forest Service campground near the top of Santa Rosa Mountain as their base, as the signs could not have been completed in a day or even, probably, a week. The nine-mile dirt road leading to the summit from State Highway 74 is full of sharp curves

and bumps, but reasonably easy for passenger cars. Except for one or two parcels of private land in the area, Santa Rosa Mountain is now part of the public holdings of the San Bernardino National Forest.

Controversy was part of Steve Ragsdale's life-style before he died. When he founded the community of Desert Center, California, halfway between Indio and Blythe, he ruled that no alcoholic beverages were to be served in the one and only cafe. Ragsdale kept to his decision despite the fact that in 1942, U.S. troops began using that desert area for tank training.

This open space was the only area in the country that resembled North Africa and which was big enough for tanks to fire volleys of shells without

hitting human habitation. General George Patton's men trained there without ever getting a cold beer in Desert Center.

Continued on page 30. ➤



A typical imitation Ragsdale "treeboard."

### WANTED

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## BLMers Quit Over Transfers

Tombstone, Ariz. — Within the past eighteen months, the federal Bureau of Land Management has lost an entire generation of experienced, western-oriented, policy-making managers who had spent their entire careers with the agency.

In seven of ten western states, BLM directors with about 175 years of managerial line experience among them have called it quits, including Colorado Director Dale Andrus.

The exodus highlights a split that developed between western managers who had come up

through the ranks of the agency, starting at low levels in various "mud on their boots" field jobs, and a Department of Interior hierarchy in Washington, many of whose members have backgrounds as desk engineers, staff advisers, academics and lobbyists rather than as managers with field experience.

The Washington brass was variously stigmatized as "too bureaucratic, too political, too environmental" by several of the retiring state directors.

The dissatisfaction escalated from mere grumbling to out-

Continued on page 31. ➤

# DON'T "RESCUE" WILDLIFE PLEADS GAME WARDEN

**Tonopah, Nev.** — One of the more frustrating aspects of working with wildlife is our inability to get the message across concerning "rescue" of wildlife babies, says Nevada game warden Len Hoskins.

It's apparently a problem nationwide, he continues. The publications we see from other states continue to include articles asking people to leave young wildlife where they find them. Our own news releases have stressed this over and over again. Yet, almost like clockwork, sincere people who think they're being kind to wildlife continue to capture and take from the wild young owls, hawks, rabbits, ducks, deer and robins.

No human in the world is equipped to provide the necessities of life for wildlife one-tenth as well as the mother of that wildlife baby. The quantity of worms, spiders, caterpillars, ants or grasshoppers fed to a baby bird in one day would astonish the average observer. A doe deer provides exactly the "formula" needed by a deer fawn and it's quite distinctly different than any combination of cow's milk, condensed milk or other artificial diet concocted by man.

We wish people would recognize that young birds do not stay in the nest where they hatch until they reach full maturity. Many species, including hawks and owls, leave the nest while still quite small, but are fed and watched carefully by the parent birds until they can fend for themselves. Whether you find them in a thicket, on a low tree limb, in a barn or on the ground, you may be assured that the adults are nearby and foraging for food items.

During the past couple of weeks, our local personnel have picked up two young horned owls, two sparrow hawks, a young redtailed hawk, two different groups of mallard ducklings and even some sage grouse eggs that have been "rescued" from the wild by well-meaning but misguided people. The unfortunate thing is that less than half of these wild youngsters survive and even less of them can be returned to the wild. Once they become dependent upon human handouts, those few that do survive are dependent for life.

— Eureka SENTINEL

## NATURAL INSECTICIDES HOLD PROMISE

**Irvine, Calif.** — Scrubby plants that dominate the landscape of Baja California and the American southwest contain highly effective natural insecticides that may prove to be invaluable now that new "energy crops" are being developed.

Dr. Eloy Rodriguez, associate professor of biological sciences at the University of California, Irvine, suggests that natural insecticides can be used to fend off insects, pathogens and other agricultural pests that plague the many hydrocarbon-producing plants in the desert.

For instance, natural insecticides could be extremely valuable for the potential crop plant *Parthenium argentatum*, commonly called guayule, which grows abundantly in the desert and is rich in rubber, and *Simmondsia chinensis*, bet-

ter known as jojoba, another desert species that yields a substitute for sperm whale oil.

Rodriguez believes that the natural products obtained from the desert species provide an alternative to the traditional petroleum-based insecticides. Not only are they biodegradable, but the natural insecticides also are a good deal more accessible. These insecticides are especially well-suited for the new energy crops because all of the plants are indigenous to the desert.

One example of the type of plant being studied by Rodriguez is *Encelia farinosa*, commonly called brittle bush, a shrub found in the southwest and in Baja California, Mexico.

*E. farinosa*, a member of the *Compositae* or Sunflower Family, contains a large number of

## TREES (Cont. from pg. 29).

When the 1946 deer season was about to open in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, Ragsdale insisted on the Forest Service installing a

During the time that Ragsdale commuted to the Santa Rosa Mountains from his desert home, he built a log cabin and a tree house on the summit. The log cabin re-



Repainted signs appear on rocks as well as trees.

locked gate at the foot of his mountain top. Other ranchers in the area had enjoyed the privacy, carried over from fears of sabotage to the forest in World War II, on their properties.

There was an administrative hassle in the Forest Service and the ranger for the San Jacinto District of the San Bernardino National Forest resigned. He refused to install the gate.

The official record shows that in 1938 Ragsdale and his wife, Lydia, purchased 280 acres on Santa Rosa Mountain from another local pioneer, Arthur Nightingale. Originally, the property was part of a section granted the Southern Pacific Railroad by the U.S. government during the 19th Century to encourage construction of a transcontinental railway.

In 1953 Ragsdale turned over legal ownership of the land to Desert Center Service and Supply for one dollar. In 1965 Charles Kaplan became the new owner and four years later, he traded it to the U.S. Forest Service.

mains, but it is in poor condition. The Forest Service is attempting to discourage volunteer restoration, "But people keep fixing it up with pieces of tin and old boards," a forestry officer reported. Another forestry source says it will be decided soon whether the cabin will be officially restored or demolished.

In later years ill health prevented Ragsdale from making trips to the higher elevation. He built a coffin at Desert Center for himself as a protest against the high cost of dying.

One of his last encounters with the Forest Service occurred in the 1950s when Riverside County had enacted an ordinance against smoking in or out of cars on highways during fire season. Ragsdale was stopped on Highway 74 in the mountains when a forestry patrolman spotted him driving with a cigar in his mouth.

According to the patrolman Ragsdale argued that since he was there only in spirit, no citation could be issued. It was a convincing argument.

— Desert News Service

## EXCESS TOMATOES LEFT IN FIELDS

**Blythe, Calif.** — According to Margaret Hanna, president of the California Women for Agriculture, the tomato harvest this year was something that raised numerous questions.

"It seems the processors contracted for a certain number of tons of tomatoes per grower, and when that tonnage is reached the rest of the field is abandoned," she said.

Mrs. Hanna said that she

had picked tomatoes in a field of approximately 36 acres where the farmer had estimated some 2,000 tons of tomatoes were left unharvested. "I think this an appalling situation, when food can lay wasting in fields and millions are on welfare and in food stamp lines," she said.

— by Jeanette Hyduke

— Palos Verdes Valley TIMES



BLM (Cont. from pg. 29).

right retirement when Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus began to implement a policy calling for state directors to change jobs — either to another state or to Washington, D.C. — after having spent five years in one state. That meant that suddenly, virtually all the western state directors were facing transfer.

— Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

## HUGE NUGGET FOUND DOWN UNDER IN AUSTRALIA

Perth, Australia — A man and his wife here, both retired window washers, have found a gold nugget worth an estimated \$557,000 for the pure gold in it. As a collector's item, its value is considerably more.

The couple, parents of seven children, refused to be named for security reasons. They found the nugget with a metal detector in a secret bush camp

Reno, Nev. — What happens in a rural area when someone is sick or injured and does not speak English? Who describes to the doctor how he feels or what happened? And who explains to the patient and his relatives what the diagnosis and treatment might be?

east of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

The Perth Mint, which had to find oversized equipment to test the nugget, said it contains 419.55 ounces of gold.

The nugget — in the shape of a rough cross — is 15.7 inches long and 11.8 inches wide. It is 3.9 inches thick.

— Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

## REAL PROSPECTORS DON'T USE GADGETS

Tucson, Ariz. — A wire story (above, this page) tells how a prospecting Australian couple stumbled on a \$557,000 gold nugget while leisurely poking around with a metal detector.

That will have old Charlie Jorgensen spinning in his grave for a spell. Had Charlie come up with a big nugget with that little effort, he would have thrown it back—and quit the prospecting business.

I knew Charlie when he was in his eighties, one of the last of a breed, a genuine, bonafide Alaskan sourdough. He had hiked over the Chilkoot Pass in 1898.

Charlie spend fifty years clawing at the frozen earth of the Alaskan wilderness, sluicing its icy streambeds, looking for gold, finding gold . . . a good deal of it.

But it wasn't the gold that had such a grip on Charlie. It was the finding of the gold that had its talons sunk so deeply into his weatherworn old hide.

It was the soothing of that mysterious fever that had forced him up snow-custed mountains, across rampaging rivers. It was the finding of what no man had yet found that made him endure sixty-below temperatures that could

turn 100-proof whiskey to slush. It was putting up with mosquitoes that could and did eat the unwary alive. It was risking the wrath of jealous grizzlies that can outrun a horse. It was the battle for survival in a lonely world where luxury was being warm and having a bellyfull of salt pork and beans.

Charlie lived in a small cabin on the banks of the Chena River near Fairbanks. He had a wood stove, a lantern for light, the best whiskey that could be bought and a beat-up old World War II ambulance that made him the terror of what few roads there were. He also had about \$300,000 in the bank.

For fifty years Charlie pitted his brain and brawn against the shifting odds of the wilderness. He won.

Had there been a metal detector, Charlie would have been a sailor, an explorer, a trapper, a prize fighter, or maybe even an environmentalist. He would have scorned prospectors, for all they would have been after was the gold.

—Don Robinson

— Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

## LANGUAGE BANK AIDS MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the Reno-Sparks area there is a service to call which provides an interpreter either by phone or in person. It is called the Nevada Language Bank and is staffed by more than 125 volunteers who speak some fifty languages and dialects. Unfortunately, though, it takes a toll call for rural people to reach the Bank.

The Public Information/Education Committee of the Greater Nevada Health Systems Agency is currently sponsoring an effort to develop a similar service in other rural areas of Nevada.

Only three steps are needed to start the service anywhere: (1) Compiling a list of people in the community willing to act as interpreters; (2) keeping the list in a central place such as the sheriff's department, fire station, hospital or emergency facility; and (3), keeping the list up to date.

— Eureka SENTINEL

There is one car in America for every two people, but New York City has only one for every five.

Gold is so heavy that one cubic foot of it weighs a ton.

## FEDERAL JUDGE ORDERS CITIZEN TO CEASE ACTION AGAINST GOVERNMENT

Needles, Calif. — "I've learned one lesson after I became involved in a dispute with the federal government," Dale Stout, Needles' most harassed citizen (*Desert*, August 1980), said. "That lesson is basic. The government has the time, money and legal talent available in order to confiscate private land for what they always term as 'the best interests of all the people.'"

Earlier this year Stout demolished a dirt dike which was placed upon his property by the Bureau of Reclamation in the early 1950s when the government re-channeled the river. Stout never gave permission of entry upon his property. He continually demanded relief from the unsightly dirt dike which he claims has ruined his

INSECTICIDES (Cont. from pg. 30).

terpenoids — plant chemicals that are known insect-feeding deterrents. The major "repellent" chemicals found in *E. farinosa* include the products farinosin and encelin.

A closely related species is *Geraea viscida* which grows primarily in Baja California. This species contains a bioactive principle in its trichomes or glandular hair. The compound has proven to be effective in deterring feeding by butterfly and moth larvae.

Another type of insecticide comes from the chromenes (precocenes) within some of the desert species, particularly those in the Sunflower Family. Chromenes are compounds that interfere with the insect's ability to synthesize its juvenile hormone which controls the larval and nymph metamorphosis. So far, at least 10 chromenes have been isolated from the brittle bush.

Some species in Baja California are coated with trichomes (glandular hair) that secrete large amounts of quinones, another type of natural insecticide. For example, two species from northern Baja, *Phacelia parryi* and *Phacelia ixodes*, kill insects by trapping them in their sticky secretions of quinones and terpenes.

—Desert News Service

riverfront property. The land is located north of Bermuda City on the Arizona side of the river.

The government made several demands prior to taking the matter to federal court. Stout was asked to replace the dirt dike at his own expense. He refused. The government then asked for permission to enter onto Stout's land for the purpose of rebuilding the dike. Stout refused to honor that request.

A Federal Judge saw the problem in a different light. He issued a restraining order which compelled Stout to cease his action against the government, and the dike was replaced.

— DESERT STAR

# STOMPIN' TIME IS ANYTIME IN SOUTHWEST TEXAS

By Robert Joe Stout

DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Austin, Texas — Drinking is a tradition in this state. So is "stompin'," a derivation of a social custom known elsewhere as "dancing." According to Henry Holman, an expert on Texas politics as well as Texas music, stompin' began over a century ago in a barn somewhere between the Neches River and El Paso when a slightly inebriated young cowboy whose feet and boots had grown together attempted to waltz with a neighboring rancher's daughter to music produced by an enthusiastic, but somewhat deaf, fiddler.

The result was a form of entertainment that's alive and well in Texas today. Hundreds of thousands of Texans of all ages and from all walks of life step into little country dance-halls every Saturday night to carry on the tradition of stompin', beer and western music. In El Paso and San Antonio and on the outskirts of Houston and Dallas, these halls rival those in Las Vegas, Nevada, and on Hollywood's Sunset Strip for ritz and splendor. But the most popular — and the most fun — are the ramshackle taverns, remodeled barns and small-town meeting halls that fit the western singer's definition of a "honky-tonk."

One of my favorites was the Split Rail in Austin. Originally a drive-in that specialized in foot-long hotdogs and cold Texas beer, the Split Rail enclosed part of its parking lot beneath a corrugated roof, added tables and a bandstand and advertised "BEER \$1.25 — 64-OZ PITCH — NO COVER CHARGE." Some of the best musicians in central Texas sang and played there, including Dee Turnbow and Ernie Threadgill. (The latter also owned his own "club," an unpainted filling station north of town; he tended bar himself during the week, a guitar propped against his cash regis-



In Texas, "stompin'" was a great entertainment, and dance halls had to have sturdy floors to survive the pounding from the cowboys' boots.

ter and a host of old western music classics on the jukebox.)

Honky-tonk music is as old as the west itself. Its roots include the old English ballad brought to the southwest from the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, Protestant church hymns and Mexican *mariachi* music. Unlike the eastern and southern United States, where pioneer roots go back nearly two centuries before the Revolution, the southwest burst suddenly into being. Successive booms — cattle, gold, cotton, oil — stimulated this rapid and unpredictable growth. Jobs pulled men away from their families for long periods of time and trading centers were few and far between. Little wonder that after six weeks on the range, or mule-skinning a wagon 300 miles through Indian country, or ramming heavy oil-field drills into the ground in search of liquid gold, the newcomer was ready to cut loose and tie one on in a frontier saloon or adobe-walled Mexican *cantina*.

A few such places managed to import pianos, but most relied on the music of guitars and violins. A good musician was as highly regarded as a good

roper or good shot by the frontier culture. The bandit Juan Cortinas, who battled the newly formed Texas Rangers on both sides of the Rio Grande during the early days of Texas statehood, once sent his favorite guitar player as a spy into the Ranger camp. The young man was caught but his life was spared because the Texans needed his music. According to south Texas folk historian Raul Hernandez, the young man acted as a double-agent until his espionage career was ended by Cortinas who caused both of his legs to be crushed in a carpenter's vise. But, though crippled, he continued to entertain frontier audiences for years after Cortinas himself was killed.

The coming of civilization didn't do away with the honky-tonks. Nor did it change the moods or rhythms that underlie contemporary country and western music. From early cowboy songs like *Little Joe the Wrangler* ("which essentially was sung at the moon," the late Hank Williams remembered), to today's fully orchestrated night club performances, western music has dealt with essential issues

of western life: loneliness, unfaithfulness, alcoholism and the joys — and problems — of married life.

Many of the Split Rail's regular customers were university students and G.I.s from homes a long way from Texas. Though they had grown up on a different kind of music, they found, in the informal honky-tonk, a "... certain kind of fitting in, like one gets at a baseball game. Or a party." Concert and ballroom music never quite make it in the Southwest, except as a sometimes pleasant but nevertheless foreign cultural intrusion.

For the honky-tonk is more than a place to drink. It's a meeting place, the Texas version of the eastern town square. Cattle are dealt and oil lands traded over whiskey at the stand-up bar, where glass ashtrays have replaced brass spittoons and a gaudy jukebox the lone Mexican guitar player. Farmers, salesmen, field hands and store clerks blend together to affirm their essential existence against the uninhabited stretches that make the west seem so vast and formidable to the outsider. Restricted by good behavior throughout the week, they begin to take off their masks when the band arrives. The songs are about their troubles, moods and pleasures and the music is innately stomposable. One doesn't need expensive shoes or a glass-smooth dancefloor to pick up the simple guitar beat. Nor does one need to dress up.

From El Paso in the west to the Louisiana-Arkansas border and from the lush Rio Grande Valley north to the lonely plains and oil fields of the Texas Panhandle, little honky-tonks do a brisk and entertaining business. Many serve only beer and it's best drunk quickly, while it's still ice-cold. (Local beers like Lone Star, Pearl and Shiner's compare favorably with those



brewed anywhere in the nation.) Finding a little place like the Split Rail is no problem: all you have to do is roll down your car window as you're coming into town on a Saturday night.

Almost anything can happen once you get there. A mishap-plagued diesel crashed into the Split Rail, upsetting a load of Thanksgiving turkeys, one night when Dee Turnbow was singing. Neither the entertainer nor the audience panicked. A waitress rushed over to offer the white-faced driver a pitcher of beer and Turnbow, always a showman despite his dead-panning demeanor, slipped into a chorus of an old western classic entitled, "All Upset Over You."

Historian Hernandez tells of a gun-fight being interrupted in a little converted hamburger stand outside of Laredo by a waitress who wanted to collect for the band before the two antagonists killed each other. By the time they'd dug into their tight Levis pockets and dumped what change they could find into the hat she was carrying, their argument had been forgotten.

While a Mexican motif — *ambiente* — is apparent in the honky-tonks throughout West Texas and along the Mexican border, many of those in the hill country north of San Antonio, west to Fredericksburg and east to Smithville exude a definitely German flavor. New Braunsfels, a favorite stompin' grounds of mine, makes sau-



In the early days of the Texas frontier, a good musician was as valuable as a good steer. He didn't have to be pretty, either.

sage to rival Milwaukee's and is the home of some tremendous appetites. The dancehalls around New Braunsfels are big and airy and the music has a definite polka beat. The dancing is robustly athletic; couples swirl around the floor with long, loping strides and every band boasts at least one accordion. (Most of these halls are located out in the country, but one only has to inquire at any gas station or restaurant to get precise and detailed directions.)

Such current "Top 40" entertainers as Johnny Rodriguez, Freddy Fender and Johnny

Paycheck sang in places like the Split Rail while they were on the way up. Most western bands and entertainers will share their microphones with kids just starting out. Threadgill, a short, pot-bellied, good-humored ex-cowboy in his late fifties, gave a skinny, volatile but uncertain young woman her first professional singing job in his cluttered little gas station. Janis Joplin went on to record "Me and Bobby McGee" and a dozen other top hits and was one of hard rock's brightest stars when she died of a drug overdose several years ago.

Threadgill and Dee Turnbow, in classic honky-tonk tradition, always treated their audiences like the human beings that they were. Neither used stacked amplifiers or depended on a lot of electronic equipment. They talked to their listeners, played personal requests and confided their aspirations and failures. Even the casual beer drinker who dropped by for the first time left the place feeling that the entertainers were his personal friends. That, I'm sure is what makes the southwest's stompin' grounds — the honky-tonks — so popular.

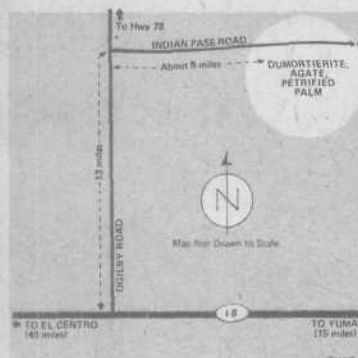


The Las Vegas, New Mexico, cowboy band reputedly was one of the best around during the days preceding World War I. They were highly sought for Sunday concerts as well as Saturday night dances.

# THE DESERT ROCKHOUND

by RICK MITCHELL

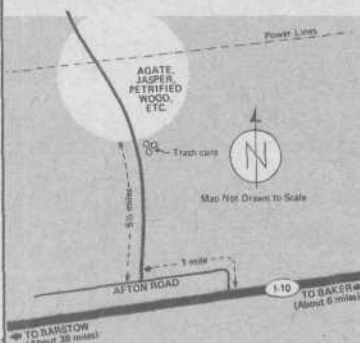
**Collecting Sites:** Beautiful specimens of blue dumortierite can be found a few miles north of Winterhaven, California, just west of the Colorado River. Take Interstate 8 to the Ogilby Road turnoff, which is about fifteen miles west of Yuma and forty miles east of El Centro. Travel north thirteen miles and turn east toward Indian Pass. This is a well-graded dirt road and should present no problems for passenger cars if they are driven with care.



Go about eight miles and park in any convenient place; you will then be inside the collecting area. From here it is necessary to do some walking, but the rewards are worth it. Head south over the shallow hills and you can pick up many pieces of the beautiful blue and purple dumortierite, as well as some nice petrified palm and agate. The dumortierite should be carefully selected, though, since much of it is quite grainy and does not take a good polish. Look for the more solid pieces. It resembles sodalite, but tends to be a little darker and more purple. Beautiful jewelry can be made from it, as well as from the less frequently encountered petrified palm and agate.

There is yet another California location where fine cutting materials can be found. This is the Afton Road site, about 38 miles east of Barstow, off Interstate 10. Agate, jasper, petrified wood, petrified reed, petrified palm and some nice volcanic materials can be

picked up, and most can be fashioned into fine polished pieces.



Take the Afton Road turnoff, double back one mile, and head north another 5½ miles. Here you'll see, if nobody has removed them, a number of trash cans on the right. This designates the start of the collecting area, which continues throughout the broad valley to the north on both sides of the road. The material here is not extremely plentiful but, after a good rain, nice specimens can be located with very little trouble. The further you walk from the road, the more there is to be picked up. This is one of those sites that takes a little patience but the specimens found and the nice, level, somewhat remote camping areas, make it a most enjoyable collecting location.

**New Equipment:** Raytech Industries claims a breakthrough in diamond cutting blades with their newly designed discs, called Sintered Rim Blades. The diamonds are completely embedded in the metal, so the cutting should be freer and smoother and, best of all, the cost is the same as standard blades. Raytech's address is P.O. Box 84, Stafford Springs, CT 06076.

Crystalite Corporation has developed a new faceting lap called The Last Lap. It is made from pelletized metal in an epoxy matrix, and is quite hard. In fact, it has been found to resist grooves even when polishing beryl, tourmaline,

topaz, sapphire and quartz. The Last Lap comes in six-inch and eight-inch diameters, and a container of 50,000 grit diamond is supplied with each. For more information, contact Crystalite Corporation, 13449 Beach Avenue, Marina Del Rey, CA 90291.

At last somebody has developed a method of holding slabs on a vibrating lap machine. It is called the Lap Mate, and eliminates the need for dopping or balancing heavy items on top of the slab when it is being ground. It consists of a lead weight and four spring-loaded pins. The slab is placed inside the pins and they grip its edge, thereby centering and firmly holding it directly under the weight. The device holds slabs of virtually any shape and can accommodate them as thin as 3/16th of an inch. There are three sizes available and each can be adjusted about 2½ inches within their diameters of 3½ inches, 4½ inches and 5¼ inches. Write Metal Designs Manufacturing, 1002 Haines Avenue, P.O. Box 643, Rapid City, SD 57709.

William Cate has just completed his authoritative book, "Finding California Gold," and it promises to be a very useful book for anyone looking for that elusive metal. It lists 5,000 known gold locations, as well as just about everything you ever would need to know about gold itself, from formation to processing to selling. It is full of helpful tips by Cate, a recognized authority on gold mining. The book may be ordered from the Desert Magazine Book Store, P.O. Box 1318, Palm Desert, CA 92261. The price is \$20.00 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling but remember, that is currently less than 1/30th the value of an ounce of gold!

The Rand District News and Miner publishes a little pamphlet on the history of the famous Rand Mining District. If you plan on doing any rockhounding in the area of

Randsburg, Johannesburg, Red Mountain, Atolia or Garlock, I highly recommend sending fifty cents to P.O. Box 266, Johannesburg, CA 93528, and requesting a copy of "Roaming 'Round Rand." This is one of the most famous mining regions in the entire Mojave Desert, as well as an outstanding rockhounding area. Your four bits will be well spent.

**Helpful Hints:** A very good idea for field collectors picking up tiny stones is to take a coffee can or pill vial and make two intersecting cuts its plastic lid (+). Just press the stones into the area where the cuts intersect and they will fall into the container, being unable to get out and be lost.

The Oilbelt Rockhounds offer a number of very handy suggestions. One is to spread catsup on copper specimens, let it dry for a few minutes and then rinse it off. As hard as it is to believe, the specimens will be much brighter after this catsup treatment.

The San Jacinto-Hemet Rockhounds offer yet another copper cleaning suggestion. They recommend dipping your specimens in a glass bowl containing Tony Wave Lotion. Sosh them around for about a minute, remove, rinse in water, and the tarnish is gone. Only the wave lotion, though, should be used. Don't put the copper in the neutralizer or ammonia, since these chemicals may actually dull the copper rather than clean it.

Another tip, this one for removing algae and lichens from specimens, is to soak the infected material in a solution of ammonia and water. By doing so, the troublesome algae will be removed.

An excellent way to give tiger eye a top quality gloss is to first polish it in the usual manner and then completely drop the stone. Next, place a drop or two of vinegar on top, leave it for a few minutes, and give a second polish. The results are very nice.





# DESERT CALENDAR

Listing for Calendar must be received at least three months prior to the event.  
There is no charge for this service.

**Nov. 7—Dec. 14:** The historic Mission Inn of Riverside, California announces the opening of its 4th dinner theater season. **GODSPELL** will run Wednesday through Sunday, from Nov. 7 through Dec. 14. **WEST SIDE STORY** will run from Jan. 2 through Feb. 8. Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:00 and show at 7:30; Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday. Friday and Saturday, cocktails at 6:30, dinner at 7:00 and show at 8:30. For information and ordering, call (714) 784-0300.

**Ongoing through May 1981:** San Diego Museum of Man's exhibit, **FLIGHT OF THE JAGUAR**. An extensive collection of shamanic artifacts from around the world. The exhibit will include an ongoing slide show. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m.—4:30 p.m., Wednesdays—free. Located at 1350 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA 92101. For further information, call (714) 239-2001.

**Dec. 6—7:** Santa Monica, Calif. **RED CARPET SHOW** of the Westside Minerologists, Santa Monica Gemological and Los Angeles Lapidary Societies. At the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main St., Santa Monica, Calif. Sat. 10 a.m.—8 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m.—5:30 p.m. Adults \$2.25; 12 through 15 years 50¢, under 12 free. Exhibits, demonstrations, dealers, food. For further information contact Ted Boehme, 1234 26th St., Santa Monica, CA 90404.

**Dec. 6—7:** Nesconset, New York. Suffolk Gem, Mineral, Earth Science shows, 7th Annual Fall Festival. At the New York State Armory, Smithtown Blvd., Nesconset, New York. Hours: 6th, 10 a.m.—7 p.m.; 7th, 10 a.m.—5 p.m. For further information contact: Anne Hershhorn, 263 N. Country Rd., Smithtown, NY 11787.

**Dec. 11—14:** Christmas Gem and Mineral Show at the Sarasota Exhibition Hall, 801 N. Tamiami Trail (Hwy 41), Sarasota, Florida. Hours: 11th through 13th, 11 a.m.—9 p.m.; 14th, 11 a.m.—6 p.m. For further information contact: Frank Cox, 3980 8th Ave., No. 309, San Diego, CA 92103. (714) 299-2734.

**Dec. 12:** Deadline for reservations for a week of whale-watching, beachcomb-

ing, and birding on the shores of Magdalena Bay in Baja California. The trip is scheduled for February of 1981 and is sponsored by The Living Desert Reserve in Palm Desert, Calif. It will include a stay on the **DON JOSE**, an 80-foot boat which sleeps 18; along with many side trips including a beach camp and visits to local fishing villages. The total cost of the trip is \$850 which includes air transportation from San Diego, all meals, land transportation, taxes, baggage, tourist card fees and one night in the Hotel Los Arcos in La Paz, Mexico. For further details and reservations, please call or write: Sue Fuller, The Living Desert Reserve, P.O. Box 1775, Palm Desert, CA 92261 (714) 345-5694.

**Dec. 13—14:** The American River Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. of Roseville, Calif. presents the 16th Annual Show, **WINTER WONDERLAND OF GEMS**. It is being held at the Placer County Fairgrounds, Hwy 65 and All-American Blvd., Roseville, Calif. Hours are Sat. 9 a.m. through 7 p.m. and Sun. 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. For further information contact Ella Fullbright, 1449 Sebastian Way, Sacramento CA 95825 or call (916) 482-8088.

**Ongoing:** Wildlife World Museum, located in Monument, Colorado, 20 miles north of Colorado Springs. Lifelike displays of mounted birds, animals and marine life, plus hundreds of wildlife paintings, drawings, carvings and sculptures. Open Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.—5 p.m.; and Sun. 12 p.m.—5 p.m. Admission: Adults \$1.00; 50¢ for children. For further information call (303) 481-2220.

**Jan. 31—Feb. 8:** 22nd Annual Tubac Festival of the Arts, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from Saturday, January 31 through Sunday, February 8. Visit Arizona's oldest European settlement during the festival. Resident and invited artists and craftsmen will be exhibiting and demonstrating fine arts and crafts throughout the village. Southwest foods and drinks will be available. You can see historic village studios, galleries and the State Presidio Museum. For more information contact: Tubac Village Council, Inc., P.O. Box 4004, Tubac, AZ 85640 or call Lorraine Mitchell (602) 398-2163.

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## BLM PRO COORDINATES ORVs, BIKING ON PUBLIC LANDS

Riverside, Calif. — It made sense. The Bureau of Land Management hires botanists to look after plant life, zoologists to take care of fauna and mining engineers to oversee mineral problems.

So a year ago the BLM Riverside District signed on Jim Moses, an avid and experienced motorcyclist, as off-road vehicle coordinator. He looks like a biker and thinks like one, and once rode in the Barstow-to-Vegas race. His area is Barstow, the hub of desert ORV activity, particularly for motorcycles.

He schedules and does the paperwork on all competitive events held on public land. He attends most races. Not that he has to, but he enjoys them. And he's not just a spectator. Jim is a certified emergency medical technician as well as

### NESTOR FINDS A HOME

Bakersfield, Calif. — Marie Krauter of Caliente became the first person in California to receive clear title to a wild burro, "Nestor," that she adopted from the Bureau of Land Management.

The chance for adopters to receive clear title to their animals after one year of custody was made possible by the enactment of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (PL 95-514). Before that, adopted wild horses and burros remained the legal property of the U.S. government, with only possession rights given the adopter. Now under the mandates of the new law, adopters may call the animals their own after filing for clear title with the BLM after one year from date of adoption.

Any Californian who has adopted a horse or burro before May, 1980, who has not received their application for title should contact BLM's Bakersfield District Office.

Those who are interested in filing an application for adoption of one or more wild burros or horses may contact the Bakersfield office at (805) 861-4355, or write: Bureau of Land Management, 800 Truxtun Ave., Room 302, Bakersfield, CA 93301.

—Desert News Service

an experienced search and rescue man.

Last year Moses said he was involved in 87 racing events, mostly in the Rademacher-Spangler area, Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley. He's also handled varied events such as land sailing, horse trail rides, model airplane meets, Scout hikes and Civil War Club shooting demonstrations. He was once a sponsored-team rider for both Yamaha and Bul-taco, and has raced at the Isle

of Man, the Astrodome and Daytona.

Currently Moses rides an IT-250 and IT-500. Son Mike, twelve, owns a 175. His wife, Sandra, who once owned a bike shop in New Jersey, is a street rider. But Jim doesn't get his fill of riding for there's other homework. He's in the final year toward his degree in criminal justice at Chapman College in Victorville.

—Desert News Service

## ADOPT-A-HORSE PROGRAM AMENDED

Needles, Calif. — Persons who have humanely cared for U.S. government-owned wild horses or burros for one year or longer under a nation-wide federally sponsored adoption program will be offered ownership of the animals by the Bureau of Land Management.

Application forms are being mailed to approximately 4,500 individuals who have kept wild horses or burros for at least one year under the Adopt-a-Horse program.

Until a recent change in a 1971 law that protects the animals, adopted wild horses and burros remained wards of the federal government for their lifetime. The law now allows private citizens who qualify to get title to up to four animals a year after one year of humane care and treatment.

The Adopt-a-Horse program has found homes in 47 states for about 19,500 wild horses and burros. Most adopters train their animals for riding, showing, packing, or as farm animals.

Adopters reimburse the federal government for transporting the animals to a distribution center, and for a required health examination. There is no charge for the animals themselves.

While a hearteningly large number of animals have been adopted, there are some horses and burros which remain at adoption centers for extended periods of time. They are passed over because of age, sex or other characteristics by the applicants who indicated a willingness to obtain animals at that location.

The amended 1971 law

instructs the Bureau, as a last resort, to destroy unadoptable animals.

Information on how to adopt a horse or burro, along with a booklet on horse and burro care and an adoption application form, can be obtained from Adopt-a-Horse, Dept. 634-B, Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009

—Desert News Service

## TIREMAKERS THREATENED BY "SAWHILL PROJECT"

Washington, D.C. — Smaller tire manufacturers unable to afford the expensive total conversion to radial-type tires are taking up arms against the federal bureaucracy and specifically, what is known to the trade as "The Sawhill Project."

Deputy Secretary for Energy John Sawhill has proposed that all original equipment and replacement tires for passenger cars and trucks be of radial construction, a proposal all-encompassing enough to give even the Big Four tire makers collective shudders.

Dick Cepek, Inc., a small but highly esteemed firm which pioneered special tires for off-road vehicles, is typical of the many companies which would be affected. It employs 55 persons in South Gate, California, and its trademark, "Baja Proven," is known and respected by enthusiasts everywhere.

Founder Dick Cepek states that the Sawhill proposal would put him out of business. He notes that a shift to radial

tires is already occurring at a pace the industry, and his company, can afford, and suggests that the tire-buying public should dictate this pace, not "ill-advised government bureaucracy."

Radial tires do offer less rolling resistance and when inflated properly, will increase fuel economy measurably. However, only a few manufacturers, and these only recently, produce radial tires in a limited range that are suitable for primary use on other than paved roads.

The sidewall of the typical radial tire, being relatively weak to achieve the flex that in turn reduces rolling resistance, is not designed to withstand continuous impact from sharp rock, cacti thorns and other hazards associated with four-wheel-drive travel. Special tires in which radial construction is not necessarily an advantage are needed for this usage.

—Desert News Service



BLM's Jim Moses works well with bikers because he's one of them.



# CHUCK WAGON COOKIN'

## Christmas Cookies and Other Goodies

by Stella Hughes

I'VE ALWAYS BAKED the lousiest cookies in the world. Even worse than the big, heavy, clunky kind my mother made when we were kids growing up on a farm in Oklahoma. Hers were large as saucers, had mighty little butter or sugar in them, lots of flour, and were usually topped with one lone raisin. In those days we seldom had Thompson's seedless raisins, but instead the big Satsuma's with seeds, and all the recipes of that day instructed the cook to seed raisins before adding them to the batter. Mother gave us kids this chore and we hated it because, I swear, Mother counted every raisin, and we didn't dare sneak too many for ourselves.

There was no earthly reason for Mother's frugality in making these cookies, as we always had crocks of pure white lard made from our own butchering, scads of eggs, and I can never remember a time when we weren't milking a cow, sometimes two. Mother churned at least once a week, which meant plenty of rich buttermilk, perfect for baking. Yet she continued making those heavy cookies, insisting they were "filling," and better for us than over-rich ones and not as liable to give us blackheads and pimples.

Betty McDonald in her delightful book, "The Egg and I," tells of the cookies her "Gammy" made. Betty described them as "big and round and a half inch thick. Gammy put into the batter anything she could lay her hands on; left over hotcake batter, several kinds of jam, the rest of the syrup in the jug, a few grapes, cherries, plums or dates, and always used drippings instead of butter and shortening. They stuck to the roof of the mouth and tasted terrible."

Well, I'm sure our mother and Gammy took lessons from the same cook, as we kids found it hard to trade off our "filling" cookies to even the poor share-cropper's kids at school; they just weren't that hard-up. Amazing,

considering one small boy brought only baking powder biscuits filled with gravy in his lard-pail lunch bucket every day. Our pretty young teacher, fresh out of normal school, just *happened* to have an extra orange or apple to give away each day. The biscuits an' gravy boy seemed to always be the lucky recipient.

They say talent (or lack of it) skips a generation but in my case, I followed in Mother's footsteps. My children called my cookies "Gawdawful," and I finally quit making them. Then along came grandkids and they'd ask wistfully, "How come you don't have cookies in your cookie jars like other grandmothers do, instead of hair curlers?" (Or nuts and bolts, Scotch tape, clothes pins, fishing line and a half-dozen pressure regulators for pressure cookers gone, lo, these many years.)

This story has a happy ending of sorts. Mother, in her later years, became a wonderful cookie-maker. Retired and living in Long Beach, California, she and her friends played cards every week-day night and always on Sundays. No matter the game played, Mother's cookies were always winners.

In hopes I might also improve my cookie-making, she sent me all her favorite recipes, and even sent boxes of her gems of the baker's art for Christmas or birthdays as an incentive.

Sad to relate, I never tried one of the following recipes, but trust me, they're wonderful. I should know, as I've eaten tons of them at Mother's house.

My cookie jars are still catch-alls, or used as sourdough containers. One very surprised male guest once reached trustfully into a cookie jar on top of my refrigerator, and pulled back a gooey, smelly, dripping handful of sourdough starter. He reacted as if he'd been bitten by a rattlesnake.

### OATMEAL COOKIES

*Cream 1 cup soft butter or margarine and add 1 1/2 cups sugar until light-colored and fluffy; add 2 egg yolks and beat well. Sift 2*

*cups all-purpose flour with 2 teaspoons soda; stir into creamed mixture with 1 1/4 cups regular rolled oats and 1 cup raisins. Mix until smooth. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto well greased cookie sheet. Flatten each cookie slightly with fork. Bake in hot oven (400 degrees) for 6 to 8 minutes, or until lightly browned. Let stand a few minutes after removing from oven. Makes about 8 dozen 2-inch cookies.*

### RICE CRISPIE COOKIES

*1 cup shortening  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 cup white sugar  
2 cups quick oats  
2 cups Rice Crispies  
2 cups flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
2 eggs, well beaten  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup coconut  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 teaspoon soda  
Cream shortening and brown sugar first, then add white sugar and cream together. Sift dry ingredients together and add a little at a time to batter with beaten eggs and vanilla. Add oats and coconut, and lastly fold in Rice Crispies so as not to break them. Drop on greased cookie sheet and bake about 12 minutes in 350 degree oven. Makes 6 dozen.*

I may not be able to bake a decent cookie, but I can at least make a good gumdrop fruit cake. There's one serious drawback to making a gumdrop cake; all the kibitzers (and yes, the cook) eat the "makin's." This problem is solved by purchasing several extra packages of gumdrops to pass around before starting the cake.

### GUMDROP FRUITCAKE

*2 cups cut-up gumdrops (omit the licorice)  
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans  
1 package (15 oz.) seedless raisins  
3 1/2 cups flour*

(Continued on page 38.)

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1 cup butter  
2 cups sugar  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon cloves  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 cup applesauce  
Line a 10-in. by 4-in. tube pan with waxed paper. Combine gumdrops, pecans and raisins with 1/2 cup flour; toss to coat.  
Cream butter in large bowl; gradually add sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Beat eggs in, one at a time; add vanilla.  
Sift remaining flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, baking powder, nutmeg and salt. Add to creamed mixture alternately with applesauce, beginning and ending with dry ingredients. Stir in gumdrop mixture. Pour into tube pan. Bake at 275 degrees for about 3 1/2 hours. Insert a pan of hot water on bottom shelf of oven so cake will have greater volume and a more moist texture. Cool in pan. Remove paper; wrap in foil and store in cool place. Chill thoroughly before slicing.


## HOLIDAY EGGNOG BREAD

3 cups sifted flour  
3/4 cup sugar  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 1/2 cups dairy eggnog  
1 egg beaten  
1/4 cup butter  
3/4 cup chopped walnuts  
3/4 cup candied fruit

In a large bowl sift together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and nutmeg. Combine eggnog, egg and butter; add to dry ingredients and stir until blended. Stir in nuts and fruit. Turn into buttered 9-in. by 5-in. by 2 3/4-in. loaf pan. Bake for 1 hour, 10 minutes.

## HOLIDAY BANANA BREAD

1 egg  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 cup shortening  
3 ripe bananas, mashed  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 cups flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 cup chopped dates  
1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries (red and green)  
1/2 cup chopped nuts

In large bowl, beat egg, sugar, shortening, bananas and vanilla until smooth. Sift flour and soda together and blend into banana mixture. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour batter into greased and floured loaf pans, or 9-in. by 5-in. by 3-in. pan. Bake in moderate oven 350 degrees about 1 hour, 15 minutes, or until done. 

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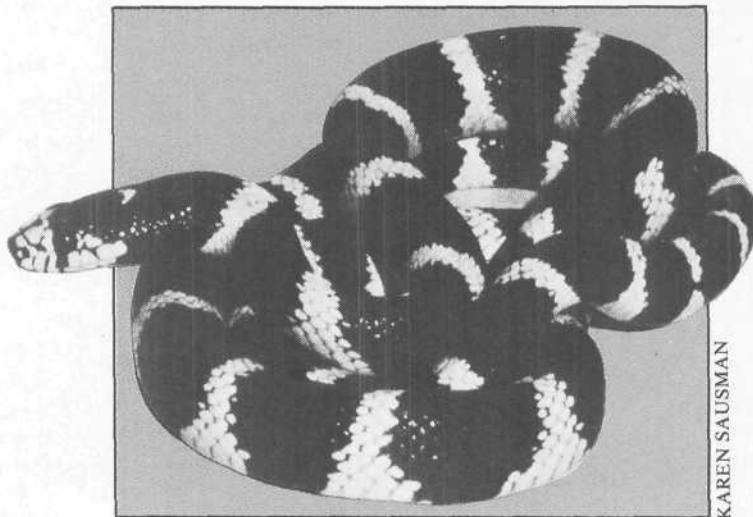




# THE LIVING DESERT

## Banded Royalty

by Susan Durr Nix



KAREN SAUSMAN

*"The black and white banded snake happened on the rattlesnake accidentally. The rattler, smelling danger, tried to slink away, flattening its head and shoulders to the ground as if to make itself invisible. When that didn't work, it arched its body into a loop and beat savagely at the other's head. Only when the banded snake seized the rattler with needle sharp teeth did the viper resort to its venom-filled fangs, striking again and again. Enraged, the black and white snake began coiling its body around the larger rattlesnake, exhibiting a strength so totally out of proportion to its size that the benumbed victim's resistance collapsed. Whether its heart stopped before it suffocated is immaterial. The rattler died, but probably not before the other worked its mouth over the viper's head and began the slow swallowing process."*

**Y**OU MAY HAVE guessed that the banded predator was a kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus*), best known for its immunity to rattlesnake and other native snake venom. This advantage over notoriously deadly animals, plus its wonderfully strong constricting coils and great agility, mark it as genuine royalty among reptiles.

Ironically, the kingsnake resorts to the rattler's tricks when threatened itself, whipping the ground with its tail to simulate the viper's warning sound. It has few other defenses: no poison, certainly, and coloration that is often more conspicuous than concealing. The kingsnake is markedly easy prey for a hawk or a roadrunner. Up against a mammal like a skunk, kingsnakes may

bite and if they get a mouthful, actually chew into the flesh. Or they may release a foul smelling liquid from anal glands to repel predators. They are moderately fast snakes, but like all serpents, their speed is limited by the absence of legs.

Leglessness is an extreme specialization that explains a lot about a snake's appearance and behavior. Movement, for instance, is facilitated by a long slender body and flattened belly that grips the surface of the ground. A tough scaly skin reduces friction, yet is sufficiently elastic to permit the animal to coil and arrange its body in a series of "S"-shaped loops. Amazingly flexible backbones with several hundred vertebrae and long stringy muscles enable snakes to wriggle in a continuous stream of movement, or push and pull themselves forward accordion fashion. Wide, overlapping belly scales, called scutes, work like tractor treads for some snakes, while those who live in loose sand, like the infamous sidewinder, elevate sections of their bodies and throw themselves sideways and forward.

Eating presents peculiar problems to snakes, whose prey are generally larger than they are. Without legs and strong tearing and chewing teeth, they are unable to reduce an animal the size of a rodent to manageable mouthfuls. Somehow that small mouth and thin frame must devour the meal intact, which is no easy feat unless you're a snake with an elastic jaw and backward-curving teeth.

Snakes don't actually *swallow*, using their tongues as we do. The mouse stays put while the snake slowly crawls over it

by moving the two halves of its upper and lower jaws forward in rotation, and using its teeth to hold on. Meanwhile, enzymes in the mouth begin digestion. The neck stretches to receive the bulky mouse, and moveable ribs on each vertebra expand to accommodate it. Elongated internal organs allow it to pass on to the stomach.

Kingsnakes do not specialize in rattlesnakes as is commonly supposed. They eat other snakes, including other kingsnakes, as well as mammals, amphibians, birds and eggs. They locate their prey, as do most snakes, with eyes and forked tongue. The latter picks up and decodes chemical information about the environment. Flicking the tongue in and out, a snake can identify prey, find a mate, detect danger and even tell when an animal like a human being is too big to eat — an ability frightened people would do well to remember.

Most snakes have keen eyesight at short distances. Their disconcerting, glassy-eyed stare is unintentional. They have no eyelids. Transparent scales protect both eyes from dust and debris, and these spectacles are shed periodically with the rest of the skin. Until recently it was assumed that snakes were deaf, but experiments have proven that they not only hear, but that they hear quite well. Although they don't have external ears, vibrations are carried through the skin and lungs to the inner ear. In a quiet room a snake can hear a soft voice at ten feet — a disconcerting alteration of a centuries' old misconception. Eve knew better.

(Continued on page 40.)

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Like all reptiles, kingsnakes have no internal means of regulating the temperature of their blood. They must seek shelter from the sun and find sources of warmth like asphalt roads, driveways and dark rocks when it's cold. Consequently in the desert, kingsnakes are active in the early morning or evening. These snakes range all over the country and in more temperate climates are usually seen during the day. It is only the desert which renders them nocturnal.

Recognizing a kingsnake is either very simple or very difficult, depending on which one you see. There are eight known species and numerous subspecies. All are confined to the western hemisphere and all are either a combination of white/cream/yellow and black/brown/green or red, black and yellow/white. The black and white banded species might be either the California king (*L. g. californiae*) or the Desert king (*L. g. yumensis*), both of which are found in the southwest. Near San Diego, however, *californiae* appears as a striped variant, a dark snake with a light stripe down the length of its back. Banded and striped young are born from the same egg clutch; they are brothers and sisters in all but color pattern.

Easterners know kingsnakes as large black serpents with a cream or yellow chicken wire pattern; elsewhere they are speckled or, to confuse matters more, all black. Some of the "candy stick" kings are known commonly as milk snakes, from the erroneous belief that they suck milk from cows' teats. The Sonora mountain and California mountain kingsnakes are said to be the most beautiful snakes in the country. Their strikingly vivid red, black and white or yellow rings often get them in trouble, however, because they look very much like the poisonous Arizona coral snake.

With sufficient presence of mind to recall a simple rhyme, no one need fear these harmless snakes:

"Red touch yellow, kill a fellow;

Red touch black, good for Jack."

If red and yellow bands abut, the snake should be avoided. If the red is banded by black on both sides, the snake is non-poisonous. Few of these kingsnake populations overlap. Any reputable guide to reptiles will identify kings by range and coloration; they are the best key to local varieties.

All snakes are helpful controls on other animal populations, and natural predators effectively keep snake numbers in check. Unfortunately, many people fear snakes in general and kill them indiscriminately and usually, unnecessarily. Kingsnakes are that rare exception, a snake frequently protected and welcomed around human dwellings. At the Living Desert Reserve, kingsnakes are exhibited in the Nocturnal Room, along with other reptiles of the desert world. **D**

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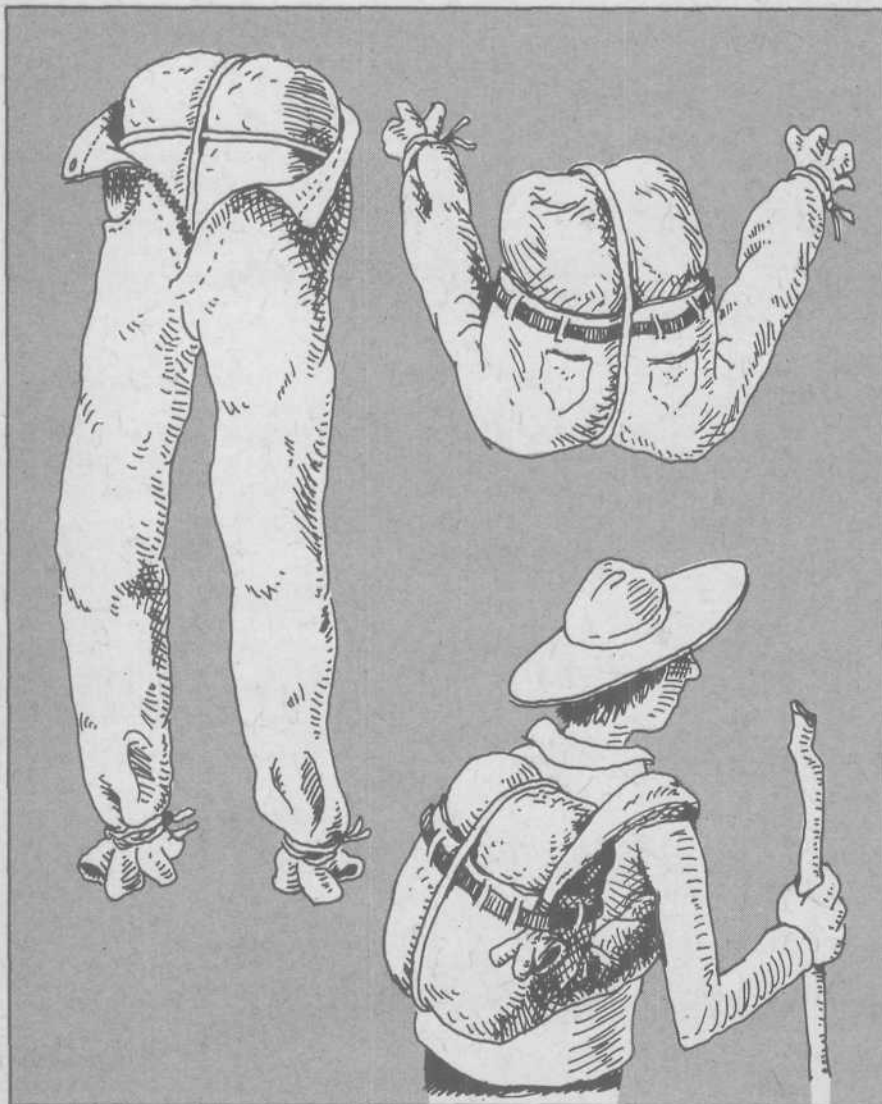


# THE SECOND TIME AROUND

by Nyerges

## Recycling Pants into a PACK

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# THE TRADING POST

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**YOUR AD** could be run on this page at modest cost — only 75¢ per word per issue (1 or 2 issues), 70¢ per word per issue (3-5 issues), and only 65¢ per word for the same ad in six consecutive issues.

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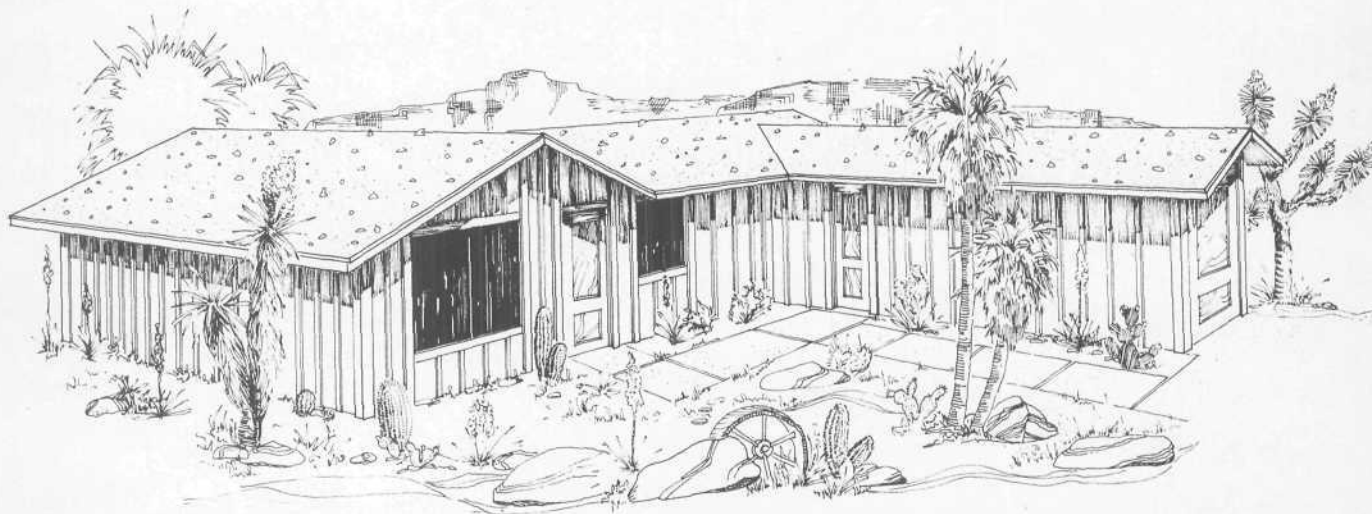
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DESIGN & RENDERING BY B. HELTON-BERG

## THE BASIC HOUSE

**T**HE LONG-TIME resident of Phoenix, or Henderson, Nevada, or even Gardena, California, who has owned and lived in the same house for ten or twenty years is usually both pleased and horrified when he finds out what this house is worth today. What he paid \$29,999 for in 1971 is likely to go for between \$80,000 and \$90,000 on the current market in the same neighborhoods of these same aforementioned places.

He's pleased by this unearned increase in net worth but horrified at the cost of replacement when he thinks of retiring to less crowded climes. He sees his entire "profit" wiped out in a move that offers no escalation other than newness.

So enters Parker Development Corporation and its concept of the "Basic House." For \$33,900 at this writing you can have built on your lot an 880-square-foot, two-bedroom, one-bath home complete with kitchen built-ins and such extras as a closed garage, up to 25-feet of concrete driveway and a five-year soil treatment for termites. Or you can save an additional \$8,000 by finishing the house yourself.

It's called a "starter" or "retirement" home and in a sense, the economics of these two stages in the average person's life are quite similar. Nowhere in the literature does Parker call it a "dream" home, for that it is not.

The exterior walls may be either stucco or prefinished masonite, materials that don't scream "plastic" at the neighbors. The roof is conventional built-up rock. What's more important is the structure meets all existing codes and thus is eligible for VA, FHA or Savings & Loan financing.

Energy-saving features such as dual pane windows, six-inch wall insulation, electric heating and air-conditioning, and not so much the thermostatically-controlled attic fan but the fact that there is an attic, make the design highly suitable for desert living. It is not suitable in the mountains for the roof lacks peak to handle much snow.

An alternate to the "Basic House" at the same price is the "RV House," a design modified to utilize your existing motorhome or trailer as a master bedroom. This is essentially an oversized garage with hook-ups and internal access

to the rest of the house. It too can be erected in unfinished form at \$8,000 less cost. If you and your RV move on to greener deserts, there's still a functional two-bedroom house left behind to sell.

While our tastes may run to masonry and tile, our wallets may not. The Parker design is simple, functional and therefore, pleasing. The drawings show it is expandable which is a way of catering equally to both segments of its intended market. While maybe not for everybody, we think the "Basic House" is great if only because zoning will not banish it to a mobilhome park. For further information, write Penn P. Thayer, Parker Development Corporation, Box I.D., Dana Point, CA 92629 or call him at (714) 493-0852.

**Attention Manufacturers and Marketers:** *Desert Magazine* will be glad to evaluate your product for inclusion in this column. We require that it be new, commercially available and of specific interest to our readers. For details, write New Products Editor, *Desert Magazine*, P.O. Box 1318, Palm Desert, CA 92261.



# *Desert*

TRACES IN THE SAND



Joshua forest below San Gabriel Mountains, Southern California.  
David Muench



# THE DESERT

Across the sanded desert floor  
The Joshua trees are walking  
Amongst the painted rocky hills  
The desert winds are talking.

And oh! the distance one can see  
The miles and miles of viewing  
How small indeed the works of man  
Beside what God is doing.

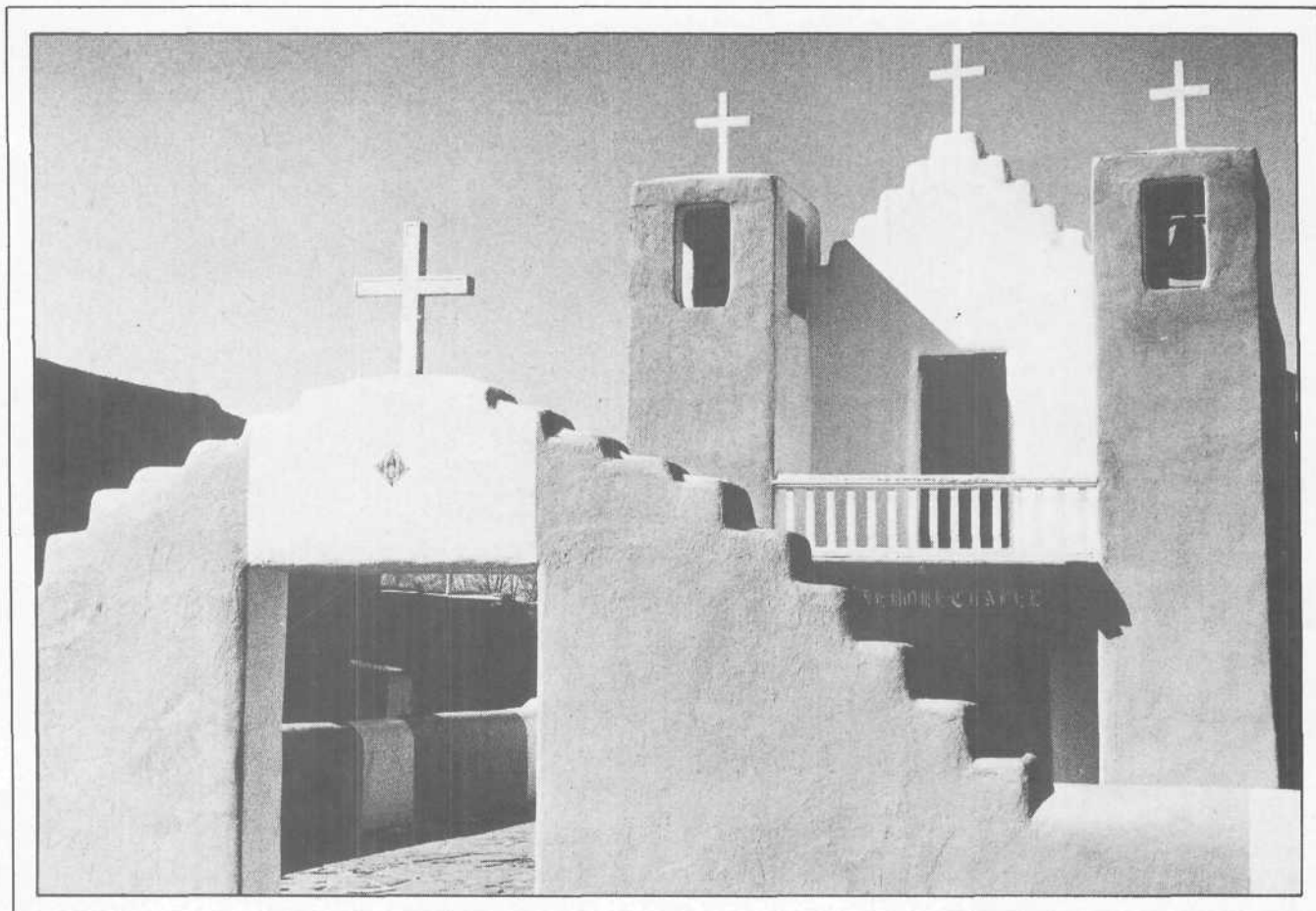
*Berta Lee Kelley*





# Desert

PHOTO CONTEST



*Church at Taos Pueblo, Taos Pueblo Indian Village, New Mexico; Spring, 1980 (9:30 a.m.)  
Asahi Pentax Camera, Tri-X film, F11, 1/250 second*

*This month's \$50 winner:*

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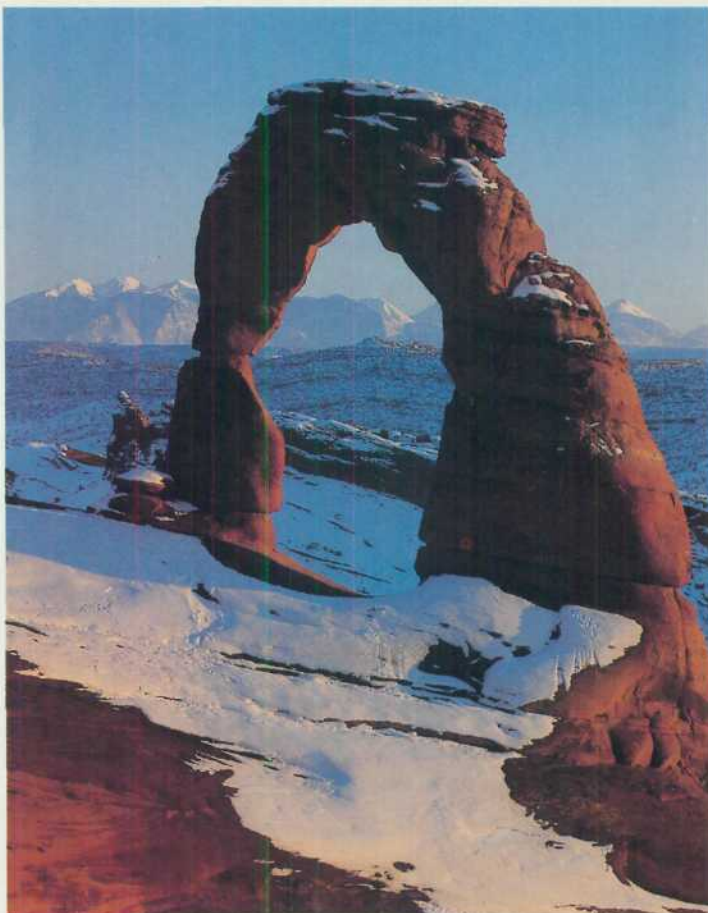
**LORENZO BACA**  
*Sonora, California*

---



# Give The Desert For Christmas

In the silence of  
the winter desert,  
"Peace on Earth"  
is a promise  
realized.



Delicate Arch, Arches National Park, La Sal Mountains, Utah.

Jerry Sieve

Winter in the desert . . . a silence you can see in the muted colors of earth and stone. Each color changing as the shifts of daylight and wind move the alien snows. Daily, and even more by moonlight, desert winter landscapes are intense drama — and a perfect place for reflection on hopes for a Holiday Season and a New Year.

And ahead lie the changing desert seasons — Spring, and Summer desert-scapes yet to come. They are always enchanting, mysterious, and most of all, beautiful. Some of the most interesting legends of our great country are centered in our desert lands — equally, some of our greatest civil conflicts, some of our most significant legends of buried treasure, and some of our most entertaining stories of the heroes and heroines of a past age.

We would like to invite you to extend Desert as a gift to

your friends and loved ones. Perhaps for them it will be a new experience or a continuation of interests and fascinations they already hold. No matter what the reason, we would like you to be assured that future issues of Desert will portray with substantial feeling your love for our great out-of-doors to your friends and special loved ones throughout the coming year.

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*The remarkably well-preserved Gold King mansion contains eleven once luxurious rooms.*

# *The* **GHOST MANSION** *of the* **HUALAPAIS** *by* **JOE BLACKSTOCK**





OUR Jeep bumped and splashed down the narrowing canyon, barely avoiding huge boulders as we neared a steep-walled left turn. For more than an hour since leaving the high country of the Hualapai Mountains south of Kingman, Arizona, all we had seen were a few stray cows, some skitterish quail and very little of what used to be a fair four-wheel-drive road.

But things changed rapidly as we negotiated that corner. Sitting in front of us, like something left over from a Hollywood set, was a two-story concrete house, an eleven-room mansion complete with stairway stretching from the riverbed up to a balcony. It was an impressive structure for anywhere, but it seemed unreal in that dusty canyon so far from the nearest paved road in Arizona's rugged Hualapai Mountains.

But this mansion, together with steep piles of yellowed tailings and some weathered ruins, is what remains of a dream never realized a half-century ago.

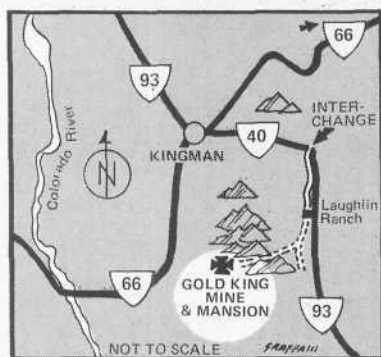
The solidly built home — it remains structurally sound even after years of exposure to the elements and man's vandalism — was constructed for the manager of the Gold King mine, which was across the riverbed on the north side of the main canyon.

Investors sank perhaps several hundred thousand pre-Depression dollars into expanding the gold, silver, copper and lead operations at the mine in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but little return was ever realized from the effort.

The main memorial to the dream remains the mansion, as it is known to the few hardy off-road enthusiasts who make it to the area. You take the narrow stairway up from the floor of the canyon to the second story. Your mind turns back fifty years; the walls look like they were only recently constructed. Traces of vines still cascade over the side in places. But, graffiti splashed on interior walls, the beautiful fireplace torn out by vandals and the cast-plaster molding ripped away from a wall brings you quickly back to the present. Its salvation, the only reason it remains today, has been its remoteness from civilization.

The flat-roofed, rectangular building has arched windows which look out in three directions. The fourth side is the canyon slope where a leveled area was apparently the site of a garden. Early photos show windows only on the upper story, indicating later improvements were also made.

To the west of the mansion, across the usually dry canyon, stood a long-gone mill. The shafts of the Gold King were to the north a few hundred yards on the slopes of a side canyon. Everywhere



## This mansion is what remains of a dream never realized a half-century ago.

there are remains of concrete walkways, walls and stairs. The builders of the project apparently intended to be there a long time.

A road, built for a considerable sum according to records, was the main access to town, through the low foothills which skirt the east side of the Hualapai Mountains. That road remains, though five decades of use and neglect have reduced it to a difficult four-wheel-drive trail at best.

Not a great deal is known about the Gold King, one of thousands of western

mines which began with high hopes. It is in a rich mining area with the United Eastern Mine, the largest gold producer in Arizona, and the rich Tom Reed and Goldroad mines nearby, only 25 miles west in the Oatman area. However, the dreams of the owners were based more on optimism than informed research.

It was known as the Joseph Stickles mine prior to the formation of the Gold King Corporation, which purchased it from Stickles in the 1920s. It was a claim with much potential, but, as Mohave County's official historian, Roman Malach, believes, not enough to warrant the large investment sunk into it over a period of several years.

"It was originally a family-type operation, which could be profitable with only a few people working on it," said Malach, who has written nineteen books about the history of Mohave County. "But those people never really checked to see if it could support a bigger operation. There was no drilling, no extensive survey to see just what was there. That was their error. As far as I can tell, there was never much production at the mine, ever."

In 1929, a tunnel 180-feet long had been drilled into the middle vein of the claim. A shaft at the end of that tunnel was sunk fifty feet and ore samples taken from the shaft reportedly ranged in value from \$27 to \$60 per ton.

The July, 1930 edition of *The Mining Journal* noted that a 45-foot gallows frame had been completed above one of the shafts which was in the process of being sunk to the 500-foot level.

However, despite these optimistic beginnings, the mine apparently failed to produce and soon closed. Only the mansion remains in relatively its original form, though vandals are rapidly gaining on it.

The mansion of the Gold King can be reached from the west, but the riverbottom road through the Moss Basin area from Hualapai Mountain Park is hard to find and is now practically impassable.

However, from the east and north, a four-wheel-drive vehicle can make it along the original mine road. Fourteen miles east of Kingman on the new Interstate 40 is the Peacock Mountain Road interchange. Head south along a fairly well-maintained dirt road (part of which follows the former route of U.S. Highway 95) seven miles to Laughlin Ranch, where the road crosses a newly constructed airstrip and lake behind a check dam. Antelope Wash Road is two miles farther south, and three miles beyond it is an unmarked "Y" intersection. Take the right, or southwest fork. It will eventually head into the mountains through a narrow canyon. About two and one-half miles from the fork is the Gold King mine and its mansion.

# SAGEBRUSH SCRIBES



Then as now small-town weeklies and those who printed them were models of outward propriety and piety, quite otherwise between the lines and behind the scenes. Photo courtesy Nevada Historical Society

**T**HEY CLAMBERED over and around green and silver sage and ochre and vermillion, mauve and taupe, and dun, tan and tawny hills. They by-passed foreboding playas and saline sinks and deserts with haunting names like Black Rock and Amargosa. They suffered the gruelling, searing summer heat and the pervasive biting winter cold. They slopped down ill-tasting, unhealthy food and guzzled bad booze. They lived in hovels of canvas and adobe and wood and rock and tin cans and bottles.

They scurried molelike to unlock a treasure trove from the stubborn earth that was niggardly in giving up its riches.

Wherever they were, most did not intend to stay in Nevada. The prospectors and miners and speculators of various sorts were there to make their bundle and return like sated packrats to a more hospitable place where their newfound treasures would assure them all of the creature comforts, and some of the niceties, of life. Few of them fared better than making bare living wages. The common man remained just that — common. But while they were in the Sagebrush State, these common men left some uncommon memorabilia which was

## by DON MILLER

reported by some uncommon chroniclers.

There was a small corps of well-known, observant journalists that included Mark Twain, J. Ross Browne and Dan De Quille, while a few lesser-known editors and reporters had their say about happenings in Nevada, too.

Taken together, these sagebrush scribes reported what they saw, and frequently wrote about matters that simply sprang from their rich imaginations. They wrote of the good and the bad, the strong and the weak, the admirable and the contemptible.

Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) spent more than six months in the Esmeralda mining district in 1862 looking after mining property. Clemens lived with Bob Howland and Horatio ("Raish") Phillips in a ten by twelve-foot cabin near the Chinese section of Aurora. They decided to move the structure to a "better" part of the

growing camp. Several of the "boys" helped move the cabin part of the way, but when arriving at the Exchange Saloon they got a powerful thirst and decided to go have some "Forty-rod."

A few drinks as pay for this job seemed a fine bargain to Twain, Phillips and Howland until scores of men came into the saloon exhibiting blisters that they had supposedly received from moving the cabin. Bob Howland later reminisced that it was becoming very expensive to buy drinks at two bits apiece and that it would almost have been as cheap to buy a new cabin with a mansard roof and observatory. Some say that up to 250 men got drinks for their real or imagined cabin-moving efforts. Howland avers that they'd be drinking to this day if he hadn't put a stop to it.

That, apparently, was Mark Twain's most "moving" experience while in Aurora. Twain gave up mining and worked in a quartz mill for a time before leaving Aurora and going to work as a reporter on the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*.

J. Ross Browne had comments about Austin during its heyday, beginning in the early 1860s. Browne commented that a stagecoach trip to Austin was



something to look back on with pleasure in afterlife. He wrote: "It is always a source of happiness to think that it is over; that there are no more gnats and alkali-clouds to swallow; no more rickety and forlorn stations to stop at; no more greasy beans and bacon to pay a dollar for; no more jolting, and punching and butting of heads to be endured, on that route at least."

Austin must have been a dusty town. In 1863 when Browne was there, an Austin "bath" was described by State Senator M. J. Farrell as consisting of two inches of cold water in a big tub, a piece of brown soap, a napkin, and a dollar and a half.

Transportation to and from Austin was a sometime problem. An editor of the Reese River *Reveille* once claimed that Austin's communication with the outside world was carried on by means of "mud-wagons," called stages for the sake of courtesy.

About 5,000 people had gathered in and around Austin by 1863. In its July 29 edition the *Reveille* told of the death of Annie McDonald: "The first (death) from natural causes." It also complained that facts on which to base local news were as scarce as preachers at a horse race.

Austin was the home of "The Sazerac Lying Club," founded by the fertile brain of a *Reveille* editor whose duties were to gather local news. He found much of his material in the Sazerac Saloon, named for a popular type of brandy. It was a favorite haunt for Austin's old-timers, who sat around the stove, smoked pipes, spat tobacco juice at a mark on the stovepipe, and swapped lies that were promptly reported in the *Reveille*.

Fires did not plague Austin, but floods and rainstorms did, resulting in extensive property damage. However, it wasn't always taken terribly seriously. A flood of August 13, 1878 swept away parts of Austin, including most of the newspaper plant. But the *Reveille* managed to publish six days following the flood. It seems that the floodwaters had roiled up the paper stock and that the newspaper subsequently had been printed on mud-soiled paper. The Carson *Appeal* retorted that it had seen the dried mud on the edges of the *Reveille* and muttered that the paper appeared "sedimental."

But it was at Virginia City that the sagebrush scribes crowed the longest and the loudest. The camp, founded in 1859, was dubbed "Virginia City" at a miners' meeting in September or October of that year. Some say that the place was named by James Fennimore, "Old Virginia," who was in camp one night drinking it up with the boys. He fell and broke his whiskey bottle, probably cried some, and solemnly poured what little remained in the bottom of the bottle over the ground to christen the camp Virginia, in honor of his native state.

Virginia City soon came to be the

queen city of the Comstock, the pride of the west, the new Mecca. The boomers came in droves in the spring of 1860 after winter had lost its bite. Reporter J. Ross Browne viewed the camp as consisting of only a few tents, shanties and cabins in March, 1860 and thought it had neither apparent beginning nor end. He wrote: "Frame shanties, pitched together as if by accident; tents of canvas, of blankets, of brush, of potato-sacks and old shirts with empty whiskey-barrels for chimneys, smoky hovels of mud and stone; coyote holes in the mountain side forcibly seized and held by men; pits and shafts with smoke issuing from every crevice; piles of goods and rubbish on craggy points, in the hollows, on the rocks, in the mud, in the snow, everywhere, scattered broadcast in pell-mell confusion, as if the clouds had suddenly burst overhead and rained down the dregs of all the flimsy, rickety, filthy little hovels and rubbish of merchandise that had ever undergone the process of evaporation from the earth since the days of Noah. The intervals of space, which may or may not have been streets, were dotted over with human beings of all sorts, variety and numbers, that the famous anthills of Africa were as nothing in comparison." Browne also stated that Virginia City was a mud hole with dubious distinctions: "climate, hurricanes and snow; water, a dillution of arsenic, plumbago and copperas; wood, none at all except sagebrush; no title to property, and no property worth having."

By the end of 1860 the camp's population was 2,244 and growing. Even Browne, when he returned in 1863, admitted that some of the large three- and four-story brick buildings were impressive, but he thought that the town still had a grotesque, "if not picturesque, appearance, which is rather increased upon a close inspection."

Mark Twain called Virginia City a settlement which "roosted royally" midway up the steep side of Mount Davidson.

The boomers kept coming, and soon the control of mining passed first from individuals to independent companies, then to monopolies such as the Bank of California. The town grew to a city of perhaps 20,000 as hotels, restaurants, theaters, churches, schools, opera houses, newspapers, and other marks of "gentility" were added. Municipal light, water, a sewer system and good transportation all helped to shape the camp, although with its many "civilized" aspects, the city still had a strong flavor of being a rough, frontier mining town.

Miners thronged to saloons, especially to those on "C" Street's three-quarter-mile-long row, where every second building was a saloon. Virginia City residents became known as accomplished tipplers. As late as 1880,


\$900,000 was being spent on liquor, wine and beer annually. One mine superintendent filled a water tank with champagne for his wedding guests. When news reached town of Lee's surrender in 1865, no newspapers were published because every member of every staff went on a toot. The question was asked, why not? Who among the celebrating subscribers would have been able to read newspapers?

Virginia City's red-light district was known world-wide for its quantity and quality. One observer claimed that the town was credited with having turned out more whores to the square inch than any other spot in the nation, unless it was Joplin, Missouri.

Fire protection was not good in Virginia City, and a number of relatively minor fires broke out frequently almost from the time of the town's founding. On the morning of October 26, 1875, a monster blaze was started. The main business section was destroyed, and mine buildings, hoisting works, and a mill went up in flames, causing a total damage estimated at between \$5 million and \$10 million. One life was lost and 2,000 people were left homeless. The flames were fed by strong winds called "Washoe zephyrs," which roared over the tops of the western Sierran crest where a down draft accelerated the speed and frequently buffeted the city.

J. Ross Browne visited the Comstock Lode in 1860 and described the "zephyrs": "Never was there such a wind as this — so scathing, so searching, so given to penetrating the very core of suffering humanity; disdainful of overcoats, and utterly scornful of shawls and blankets. It actually seemed to bubble up, twist, pull, push and screw the unfortunate biped till his muscles cracked and his bones rattled — following him wherever he sought refuge, pursuing him down the back of the neck, up the coat-sleeves, through the legs of his pantaloons, into his boots — in short, it was the most villanous and persecuting wind that ever blew, and I boldly protest that it did nobody good."

Although Virginia City was mostly rebuilt following the fire of October 1875, production fell rapidly from a peak of almost \$37 million in 1876 to about \$1,250,000 in 1881. In 1880 the population was less than 11,000, and by 1900 it had dropped to under 3,000.

Today the camp is a tourist attraction. An observer claimed that Virginia City is now an aging dowager interested only in survival, but the sagebrush scribes are still there. Its famous newspaper, the *Territorial Enterprise* is circulated to subscribers in every state and most countries. The Reese River *Reveille* still flourishes in Austin, and Trona has its *Argonaut*. In fact, there are few Nevada towns without a newspaper, many of them entitled to print a column entitled "100 Years Ago This Day." 

# The MISSIONS of SPANISH SONORA

Missionaries and miners, soldiers and settlers, native Indians and marauding Apaches together forged a remarkable society in Sonora during the more than two centuries (1600 to 1821) of Spanish rule. Of this heritage remains a way of life and the Spanish language, some splendid mission buildings and many colonial adobe homes.



**H**ISPANIC SONORA's boundaries — the Gulf of California and the Colorado River on the west, east along the Gila to the San Pedro River, south through the Sierra Madre Occidental almost to the Rio Fuerte and thence southwest to the Gulf — surrounded all of present-day Sonora plus most of southern Arizona. Remote as it was on the far northwest frontier of New Spain, Hispanic Sonora seemed a forbidding land of isolated, barren buttes scattered over an outwash-plain desert, gradually sloping up from the Gulf toward the magnificent Sierra Madres, a range laced with north-south flowing rivers in deep canyons.

The Indians in this inhospitable area were either farmers-hunters-fishermen inhabiting the Sierra Madre river valleys or seed gatherers-hunters-farmers existing on the fringe of the desert. Just outside northeast Sonora lived the hunting- and seed-gathering Apaches, whose depredations strongly influenced the later history of the area.

The first Spaniards to penetrate Sonora straggled in from the north — four survivors of a 1528 shipwreck on the Texas coast near today's Galveston. It took eight years for them to traverse Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Sonora before arriving at Culiacan, south

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## MISSION SAN XAVIER del BAC

*Tucson*

**T**HE PRESENT church was built by Franciscans between 1783 and 1797. After the Franciscans left in 1840 the Pima Indians carefully protected the building until in 1859, upon conclusion of the Gadsden Purchase, a priest from New Mexico arrived. It is now a Registered U.S. National Historic Landmark.

*Night view*

## MISSION SAN JOSE de TUMACACORI

*Tumacacori*

**C**ONSTRUCTION was not quite completed in 1828 when the last Franciscan left. Because of the Apaches, Tumacacori and Tubac were both abandoned in 1846. The U.S. National Park Service has replaced the roof and floor, but most of the structure remains as it was when it became a National Monument in 1908.

*Mission facade*



by JOHN E. ROBISON

*photographs by the author*



## NUESTRO PADRE SAN IGNACIO *de* CABORICA

### *San Ignacio*

SAN IGNACIO is three and one-half miles north of the Mexico Highway 15 village of El Tacicuri.

The basic masonry church is probably that started by the Jesuits in the early 1700s, modified and rebuilt by the Franciscans after the roof collapsed. The carved front doors are masterpieces worthy of a museum, and the spiral mesquite staircase in the west tower is a marvel of ingenious adaptation of available materials.

*Church facade from the plaza.*









## SANTA MARIA MAGDALENA *de* BUQUITVABA

*Magdalena*

FATHER KINO died here in 1711 while dedicating a chapel to San Francisco Xavier. Fallen in ruins and long buried under city buildings, the chapel and Father Kino's remains were discovered in 1966. The present church was completed by Franciscans in 1832.

*Church from arcade around the plaza.*



## SAN ANTONIO PADUANO *del* OQUITOA

*Oquitoa*

OQUITOA IS on the Altar River road, eight miles upriver from Altar. The beautiful, small church sits in the midst of its old *Camposanto* on a low hill overlooking the town. The Franciscans in 1768 "beautified and enlarged" a 1730 Jesuit church, which could be the present structure.

*The church facade.*



## SAN PEDRO y SAN PABLO *de* TUBUTAMA

*Tubutama*

TUBUTAMA IS 23 miles upriver beyond Oquitoa. The church on the tree-shaded plaza was completed in 1788. The entry at the side rather than at the rear is unusual and may have been so placed for defense. The Indian-inspired decorative motifs on the exterior have been retained in the restoration.

*The church facade from the plaza.*



## La PURISIMA CONCEPCIÓN *de* NUESTRA SEÑORA *de* CABORCA

*Caborca*

CABORCA HAS been a mission of tragedy and bloodshed, three priests and large numbers of Indians having been martyred here. The mission is a Mexican National Monument because the building served "the defenders of the Fatherland" as a bulwark against invading North American filibusterers in 1858.

Completed in 1809, the church resembles San Xavier del Bac.

## SAN FRANCISCO BORJA *de* TECORIPA

*Tecoripa*

TECORIPA'S CHURCH is old — it may be a 1660's church rebuilt. In the fenced yard in front are four bells on a rack, one of which is dated 1700 and another is inscribed "SAN FRANCISCO DE BORCA DE TECORIPS ANO 1716." Bell makers, it would seem, are not necessarily master spellers!



*Tecoripa church in the middle of a barren plaza.*

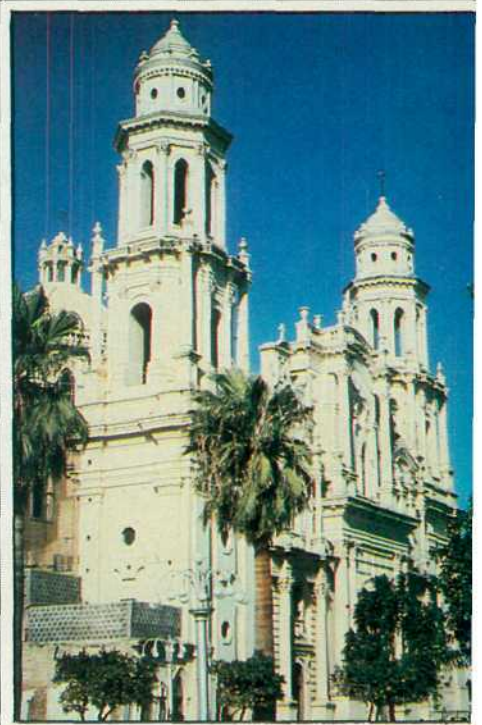


## SAN MIGUEL ARCÁNGEL *de OPOSURA*

*Moctezuma*

**T**HIS CHURCH was built by the Jesuits prior to 1730 of masonry and fired brick. The interior compares with San Xavier as one of the most beautiful churches of Spanish Sonora. Specially shaped bricks were fired for architectural detailing, as can be seen outside the east door.

*The church facade.*





## SAN LORENZO *de* HUEPAC

### *Huepac*

ON THE WAY to Huepac drive by the church in Aconchi — a very plain facade flanked by two impressive, protruding bell towers.

Huepac is unadorned on the outside but has an interior that should not be missed. Roof beams are supported by three-tiered, heavy, carved corbels — and they're spectacular! Side piers supporting the choir loft are carved and gilded with an elaborate floral design. Age of the building is unknown.

*The church facade. The bells are atop an old tower.*

## La PURISIMA CONCEPCION *del* REAL *de* los ALAMOS.

### *Alamos*

ALAMOS WAS a silvermining town founded in the 1680s and is now a historical monument to be preserved as a colonial city. The present large church on the Plaza was completed in the 1780s, trimmed with silver rather than the usual gold leaf.

*The church facade from the plaza.*

## HERMOSILLO

HERMOSILLO was founded in 1741 as Pitic, a *presidio* fortress for containment of the rebellious Seri Indians. It is now the capital city of Sonora, noted for its nightlife, crafts, antique shopping, restaurants featuring regional delicacies, the university and its museum, access to water sports and fishing on the Gulf, and sightseeing in the back country to the east. The *Departamento de Turismo* on the highway through town can provide maps and information. The cathedral (1835) and government buildings on the Plaza should not be missed.

*Facade of the Cathedral — it has everything!*

*continued from page 54*

of Sonora in Sinaloa. The survivors brought with them rumors of the golden roofs of Cibola's Seven Cities somewhere in the north, a treasure supposedly the equal of that taken from Montezuma by Cortez. They also reported having seen many emeralds (undoubtedly turquoise) and heavy woven cotton robes originating in Cibola.

In 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado with more than 200 Spaniards and at least 1,000 Indians and slaves marched north to spend three frustrating years looking for those golden roofs but found neither gold nor anything else of interest to a Conquistador — only such minor discoveries as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, "shaggy cows" (buffalo) in Oklahoma and Kansas, mountains awaiting prospectors, and cantankerous Indians everywhere.

Though Cibola's golden roofs proved but a mirage, the northern lands still held great interest for the Spanish Crown because of possible gold in the mountains and because the inhabitants were heathens to be converted and "civilized," — a task to be delegated to the Jesuit and Franciscan orders.

To make contact with the Indians and to bring them into a settlement around a mission, the Jesuits developed an operating procedure based on Sonoran geography and on the supposed wants of the Indians. In the Sierra Madres, the river valleys offered the only practical paths for communication and travel and the only areas with arable land. The *padres*, accompanied by a few soldiers and "tame" Indians, would move up a river to a location at which fields could be irrigated and cattle and horses raised in large numbers for sustenance and for sale to miners, soldiers and ranchers.

As their first task, the *padres* convinced several hostile and extended family units to gather in peace around a mission. The priest next established a place of worship, even if only a *ramada* (some uprights with a brush or palm-thatched roof) to cover the altar. Irrigated farming was started on the lowlands and cattle and horse herds occupied the surrounding hills. In the first century of activity, the Jesuits founded more than 130 Sonoran missions in the river valleys and on the outwash flood plains.

As soon as the Indians had learned to make adobe bricks, a small chapel with a flat roof was built, together with an adjacent adobe residence for the priest. If the location proved prosperous, a large church might be constructed later of fired brick or masonry with a vaulted roof and domed crossing.

When the mission town stabilized, prospectors and miners appeared in the area, followed closely by ranchers. These entrepreneurs needed to hire Indian laborers and to purchase produce


and livestock from the mission (a source of funds for church construction). Soon *presidios* (military towns) were established and these in turn required civil officials and secular clergy. Supply and market towns developed, and trade with Guadalajara increased. The missionaries, their Indian charges decimated by European diseases and maltreatment by miners, then would move to the new frontier where more heathen Indians awaited conversion.

By 1613 Jesuits had established their first Sonoran mission and by 1680 advanced to the Magdalena River just south of Arizona. In 1687 Father Eusabio Kino became missionary to the Upper Pima tribes in northern Sonora and southern Arizona. Father Kino not only founded missions, located farms and established ranches but also explored southern Arizona, proving Baja California a peninsula rather than an island. His one failure occurred with the Apaches who, by this time, had become horse-mounted roving bands of hunters and raiders who rejected every facet of Spanish "civilization."

King Charles III of Spain expelled the Jesuits from his empire in 1767. Most southern Sonora missions were secularized and the northern frontier stations turned over to the Franciscans. They also explored (Father Francisco Garces especially), reaching northwest to San Francisco and northeast to New Mexico.

In 1786, the Spanish initiated a dual policy of relentless pursuit of Apache marauders on one hand and on the other of supplying food, liquor and poor-quality firearms to Apaches who would settle near a *presidio*. Relative peace and prosperity ensued. New mission churches were built and ranchers, traders and farmers flocked to northern Sonora, settling the fertile river valleys depopulated by earlier Apache raids.

During the War of Independence, however, the Mexican government was unable to adequately staff the *presidios* and could not continue the feeding program. By 1830 the Apaches again took to the warpath, killing at least 5,000 people and chasing another 3,000 or more south. On the frontier there remained only a few weak outposts whose soldiers scarcely dared venture from behind palisades.

All missionaries were expelled by the fledgling Mexican government and since there were too few secular priests, most missions on the frontier were abandoned. Many neglected adobe buildings melted away in summer rainstorms. However, a surprising number of mission churches built by Jesuits and Franciscans survive today together with some magnificent old churches and cathedrals in mining towns, capitol cities and *presidios*. Also, many colonial homes still stand in villages throughout the area. 

One of the west's most unique restaurants

# PINNACLE PEAK PATIO

by RICK  
LANNING

**T**HE DESERT NIGHT falls softly, like a velvet glove. Stars fire overhead, giving the Valley of the Sun twenty miles away a mystical backdrop. This is Pinnacle Peak country, home of prairie dogs, Arabian horses and sizzling cowboy steaks.

Pinnacle Peak Patio is a restaurant so unique that the president's brother, Billy Carter, didn't want to leave, even after a waitress had snipped off his tie. Billy scrawled into a guest book, "This is the most fun I've ever had," which doesn't say much for Plains, Georgia or the Libyans either.

Nobody should wear a tie to Pinnacle Peak, which is just one more reason the RV crowd enjoys going there. The blue-jeaned, western-booted waitresses attend tables with a checkbook and a pair of scissors. Some 100,000 snipped ties from patrons hang from the rafters, giving proof that casualness and western hospitality are it at the Peak.

Pinnacle Peak Patio began life as a shack in the desert two decades ago. From a stopover place for fishermen on their way to the Verde River, it has grown into a nationally known restaurant that draws 500,000 customers each year.

Dorothy Schenck started the Peak. Now retired, she lives in a mobile home in Cornville, a small community seventy miles north of Phoenix.

"The Peak was my first and only restaurant," she said. "A couple owned a small building where the Reata Pass Restaurant is now located. They offered to sell the building and 26 acres for \$26,000."

The Schencks didn't have the money, so they leased the building with the first three months rent-free. They made a modest living selling fishing licenses and picnic supplies to the anglers. As demand increased, they added a steak dinner, pinto beans, salad and coffee. Steaks were cooked outside over an open fire, a practice the Peak hasn't changed.

Local ranchers were drawn to the restaurant shack by the good smells

coming from the fire. One cowman whose face was as leathery as the saddle he sat on told Dorothy, "Buy steer meat, not cow meat. If the fat's yellow, forget it."

After a while, the Schencks moved their business down the road. They bought ten acres for \$7,000 and the real Peak was born.

Many's the night a pack of coyotes sang Dorothy to sleep.

"We were out there with the jackrabbits and roadrunners," she laughed. "And those singing coyotes were lovely — full of vim and a part of the west."

The Schencks poured a concrete floor in the desert. They were helped by airmen from Luke Air Force Base. All the volunteers wanted in return was coffee or a steak dinner. The dishwasher was a millionaire real estate broker from Scottsdale.

As word about the Peak spread, celebrities began drifting in. One was Ted Williams, then attached to the Cleveland Indians.

"Ted loved this place," said Dorothy. "He could relax here. People treated him like a person, not a big league ball player. Often he'd stop here, then head down to the river to fish."

Another visitor was Sen. Barry Goldwater. Barry removed his glasses before entering the restaurant through the kitchen, thinking he wouldn't be recognized. He was, of course.

When Barry was hospitalized in 1965 with a neck injury, the Peak employees came up with a unique get-well gift. It was a test tube filled with bourbon, some dried cow chips, a naked T-bone and a champagne cork.

After his release from the hospital, Barry wrote, "Thanks for the gift. I want you to know I tried every remedy and think the cow chips did the trick — that together with the contents of the test tube. Next time, leave some meat on the bone and send a larger test tube."

A famous cowboy movie star, idol of the younger set, didn't want his fans to



know he enjoyed beer. He always drank out of a coffee cup. Naturally, Dorothy kept his secret.

Richard Boone of "Have Gun, Will Travel" came in one night in a helicopter. Pepsi-Cola was sponsoring a party for its many distributors across the country. Seven bands of musicians played for the hundreds of guests and when Pepsi's long-time spokesperson, actress Joan Crawford, made her entrance, she was wearing a western outfit of pure gold.

Waitresses approached Dorothy one day with a problem. They had learned a local charity that helped unwanted boys needed a dining room, but didn't have the money. The Peak sponsored a cowboy benefit barbecue, with a rancher





*Pinnacle Peak Patio bills itself as the "World's Largest Western Steak House," seats 2,000 inside, 600 on patio.*

supplying the beef. Result: Sunshine Acres Children's Home got a new dining room. It was only the first of many charitable efforts at the restaurant.

When Dorothy and her husband got a divorce, he moved to Tucson to set up another restaurant. Dorothy decided to sell. The new owner was Harvey McElhanon, a native of Milwaukee who, since, has established Milwaukee's first cowboy steak house. Naturally it's patterned after the Peak.

Although Dorothy is no longer a part of the Peak, her spirit lives on. A sign along Pinnacle Peak Road reads, "You are now entering Pinnacle Peak Village limits. Unincorporated. Population 47-plus humans, 12 horses, 3 cattle, 11 dogs, 5 cats, 10 burros, 1 coyote, 1

rattlesnake. Elevation 2800 feet."

Over the years hundreds of guests have left their comments in the guest books, which McElhanon has kept. A sampling of the opinions show why the Peak is still tops in the hearts of many people.


A visitor from Colorado wrote in 1957, "This is the pinnacle of fun and the peak of congeniality," and a New Yorker scrawled, "Now I feel my visit to Arizona is complete. This is really western living."

In 1960, the comment was simply, "How about 'Dis place?," and a guest from San Francisco wrote, "I've never experienced such food this side of Paris."

The man who greets you at the Peak

may be Arizona's shortest "cowboy" — five-foot-three Dan Knodl, who was born in Turkey. The personable Knodl moved to Arizona three years ago and McElhanon, impressed with his salesmanship, put him in charge of catering and booking conventions.

There is inside seating for 2,000, a patio that seats 600, and a desert cookout that can accommodate 1,500. The food is good and filling — cowboy and cowgirl steaks, pinto beans and salad plus hot apple pie, good steaming coffee and a well-stocked bar if that's your leaning.

But one warning: Don't order your steak well-done. A young lady did and was surprised when the waitress dropped an old boot in front of her. On a plate, naturally. 

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